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Kris Aquino now endorser of 17 products; she gets mom to buy them

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, March 23, 2006 ★★★ 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 105 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Gringo sighted here, there and everywhere

BAKA NASA ILALIM NG KAMA!

By PDI Visayas, Mindanao Bureaus

THE FUGITIVE GREGORIO "Gringo" Honasan may be in more places than his pursuers can keep up with.

A former official of Panitan town in Capiz yesterday

GRINGO/ A4

Senga warns of more coup attempts by Left, Right, rebs

By Dona Pazzibugan

EXPECT MORE COUP ATTEMPTS AGAINST PRESIdent Macapagal-Arroyo.

The warning came from Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga who said that the alliance between the military and leftist rebels to oust Ms Arrroyo has already taken root.

"We may have not seen the last of the attempts at a power grab," Senga said in a speech before

SENGA/ A4

Palace to regulate all gov't ad budgets

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and TJ Burgonio

A NEWLY CREATED COMMUNICATION Group under the Office of the President will consolidate the multibillion-peso advertising budget of all government agencies, including state-owned corporations, banks and pension funds—a move that a senator says could be used by Malacañang to threaten media companies critical of the administration with an ad boycott.

"The Communication Group shall guide, integrate and supervise the public information activities, including advertisements, of all departments, bureaus, offices and agencies in the executive branch of the government, including government financial institutions (GFIs) and government-owned and-controlled corporations (GOCCs), in close consultation with the head of these entities," President Macapagal-Arroyo said in Executive Order No. 511, which she signed on March 6.

The Communication Group shall be chaired by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye with Cerge Remonde, the government media chief, and Conrado Limcauco, director general of the Philippine Information Agency, as members.

Ms Arroyo said there was "a need for a body to guide, integrate and supervise the operation of these entities, with respect to their public information activities."

Quoting Malacañang insiders, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said all government ads would now be approved by Bunye.

"This is choking the media. EO 511 in effect prevents the government from using any media critical of the government," Pimentel said in a phone interview.

Pimentel said the order was "direct pre-censoring" of the media.

In an interview, Bunye said that more than controlling the

PALACE/ A6

Garci passport faked, says BSP

'Central bank finding shows conspiracy'

By Michael Lim Ubac

ONE OF THE PASSPORTS SUBMITTED BY FORmer Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to a joint House inquiry is "fake," belying his claim that he did not leave the country at the height of the "Hello Garci" poll fraud scandal last year, the former lead chair of the probe said yesterday.

"It's fake, it's fake! I told you so," Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla said. He expressed the hope that the leadership of the chamber would "not let pass this case of outright contempt of the House."

Remulla said he felt "vindicated," saying the BSP findings "strongly indicate a conspiracy to cover up" the alleged election fraud in 2004.

Garcillano's second passport (No. JJ243816) "does not conform to standard" on six counts, but his previous passport (No. BB602533) "conforms to standard," the chairs of the five House committees that looked into the scandal announced at a press conference.

The findings were contained in a certification issued yesterday by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, through BSP Deputy Governor Armando Suratos, to the five committees, which requested the examination of the two passports in February.

It is the BSP that prints all the blank passports for the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The BSP certification "weakens, severely injures and inflicts a severe blow to the credibility of

GARCI/ A4

AT LAST. After five years, former President Estrada takes the witness stand to tell his side of the story, which he hopes will validate him. As he testified, riot police kept hundreds of his supporters away from the Sandiganbayan. Already, they proclaim their idol "not guilty." RAFFY LERMA

Erap: All lies; I was convicted in streets

By Nelson F. Flores

JOSEPH ESTRADA LOOKED every inch the President that he was before he was ousted five years ago in his first appearance in his trial yesterday, denying as "a pack of lies" accusations he raided the national treasury.

For the show of his life, the actor-turned-politician wore the trappings of his office—the trademark presidential seal on his white wristband and a Philippine flag lapel pin on his "barong."

"These are trumped-up charges, a frame-up," said Estrada when asked about charges that he received P130 million in kickbacks from the tabacco excise tax for Ilocos Sur province as Gov. Luis (Chavit) Singson, his main accuser, watched from a front row seat.

"That's a pack of lies," he said. I've never asked for commissions.

ERAP/ A13

Ping: Erap knew money for Muslim youth project came from 'jueteng'

By Philip C. Tubeza

FORMER PRESIDENT Joseph Estrada knew that the money going to his pet project to educate Muslim youths and send some of them to Harvard came from jueteng—the illegal numbers racket, said his former police chief.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said Estrada wanted to bring peace to war-torn Mindanao by helping young people get an excellent education, even helping them go abroad

PING/ A13

HAGEDORN OUT

All systems go for gov't STL to kill illegal game

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Norman Bordadora

IT'S ALL SYSTEMS GO FOR THE Small Town Lottery (STL) program.

But the antijueteng czar Mayor Edward Hagedorn of Puerto Princesa is no longer on top of it.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor and Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno yesterday gave the green light to a one-year trial run for STL being sponsored by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) as an alternative to the illegal numbers game "jueteng."

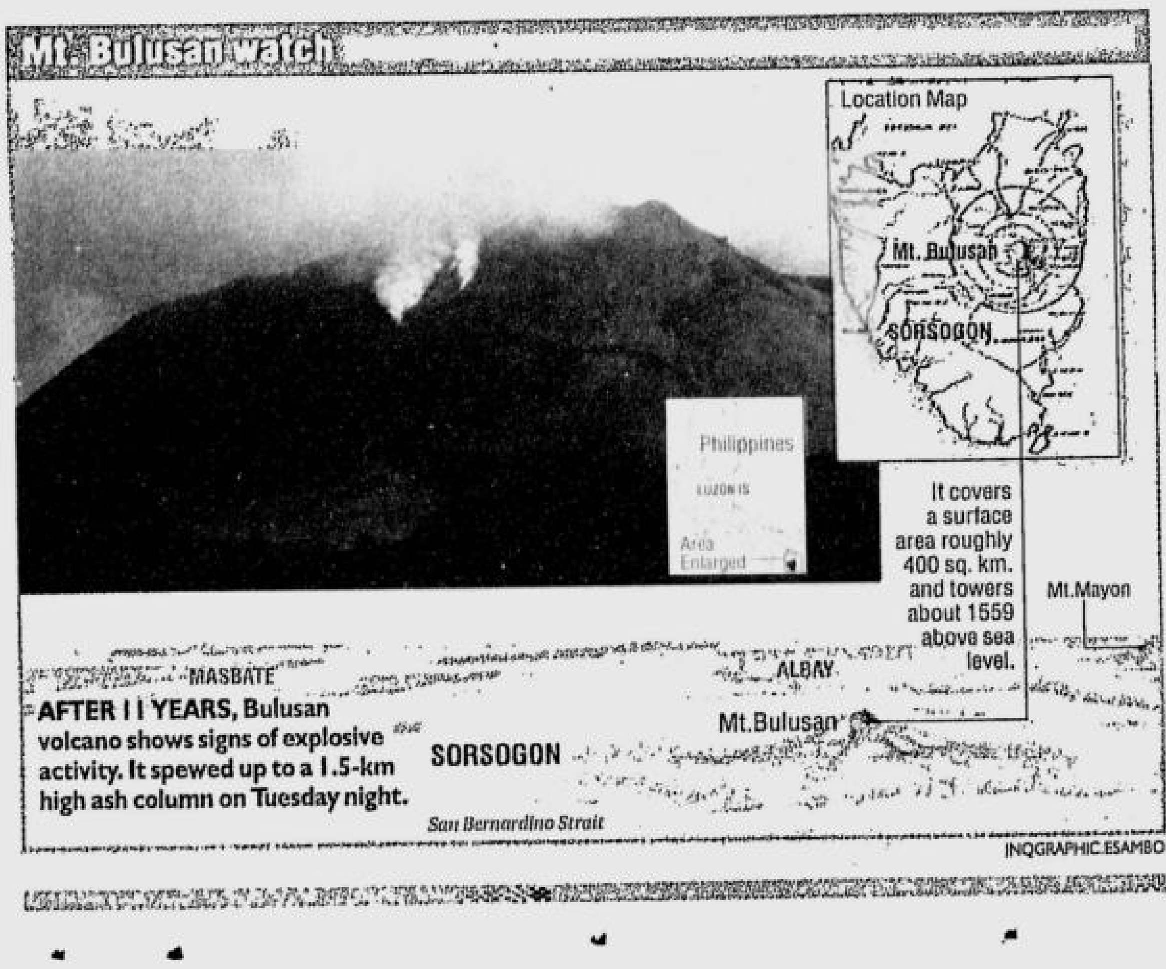
"It is clear that we should not have any illegal operations while the STL is in operation. Secretary Puno has stated all illegal operators will be arrested," said Defensor.

"Mayor Hagedorn is not involved in this (STL) because his role is specifically as antijueteng czar. (The STL) is just a petition by the League of Mayors," he said.

But Hagedorn announced on March 21 that he was organizing a team to monitor STL.

ALL/ A4

THE FIRST FEMALE US ENVOY TO THE PHILIPPINES Ambassador Kristie Kenney presents her credentials to President Arroyo on Wednesday. Ms Arroyo says that Kenney, who arrived here on March 17, told her she wants to go to Mindanao as soon as possible. Her last posting was in Ecuador. *(Story on Page A2.)* LYN RILLON



AFTER 11 YEARS, Bulusan volcano shows signs of explosive activity. It spewed up to a 1.5-km high ash column on Tuesday night.

Bulusan volcano spews ash

By Bobby Q. Labalan
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau
and Blanche S. Rivera
in Manila

SORSOGON CITY—AFTER BEing quiet for 11 years, Mount Bulusan in Sorsogon erupted late Tuesday night, spewing ash clouds as high as 1.5 km into the sky and prompting government warnings to residents not to go near the volcano.

The Philippine Institute for Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) reported a steam-driven explosion from the summit of the 1,559-meter volcano at 10:58 p.m. on Tuesday. It lasted 20 min-

BULUSAN/ A6

Erap and Chavit: Bosom buddies, mortal enemies

By Volt Contreras

AFTER MORE THAN FIVE YEARS, the two men whose bitter animosity altered the course of the nation's history finally came almost eyeball to eyeball, separated only by five seats and the dark glasses one wore.

The accuser—Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson of Ilocos Sur—slipped early into the small, tightly packed courtroom, and seated himself on the left side of the front row.

The accused—ousted President Joseph Estrada—walked in minutes later, flashing his star-quality smile, waving to supporters and visibly relishing the media spotlight denied him in the solitude of his Tanay resthouse, where he has been detained.

Estrada ambled to the front row as well and sat on the right side.

Yesterday was the first time the two men—once said to be bosom buddies—found themselves in the same room since Singson accused Estrada of receiving illegal

ERAP/ A13

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern section of Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/03/22/06

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONT PAGE

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Abu jail shootout overkill – CHR

By Norman Bordadora

MEMBERS OF A PHILIPPINE NATIONAl POLICE assault team have been liable for the summary execution of Abu Sayyaf suspects detained at the Metro Manila District Jail at Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, according to a report by the Commission on Human Rights on its investigation of the March 2005 siege at the jail.

The CHR report said the response of the PNP units to the attempted escape of Abu Sayyaf suspects who seized control of a portion of the jail resulted in the summary execution of inmates who were not even part of the escape try, according to Wilhelm Soriano, CHR commissioner for Metro Manila.

"It is up to the Department of Justice to determine the criminal liability of those responsible," Soriano said.

He said that if the DOJ were to find the CHR findings sufficient to warrant an indictment, the case would most probably be multiple murder because of the sheer number of people killed as a result of the police operation.

Twenty-three inmates, including three top leaders of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group, were killed after a crack police Special Action Force team assaulted the jail on March 15, 2005. The bloody assault, marked by fighting almost from cell to cell, ended a 27-hour standoff that started on March 13 when some of the Abu Sayyaf inmates overpowered their guards, taking their guns and shooting three of them.

Probe welcomed

Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes, who was interior secretary and who headed the crisis management team during the jail siege, said he welcomed a DOJ investigation and any charges that would be filed.

"If there'd be any, I welcome the filing of charges so we can address issues regarding the Bicutan siege. A 25-year-old policeman was killed as well as three jail guards during the incident," Reyes said in a statement from Mexico.

Reyes maintained that the police used reasonable force during the operation.

"The government had no choice but to act immediately. My conscience is clear. I did my duty to uphold the law and protect society," he said.

Soriano said the killing of suspected Abu Sayyaf leader Alhamzer Manatad Limbong aka Kumander Kosovo and his six companions in the attempted escape may have been justified as they were killed in an encounter.

Summary execution

But those of the other Abu Sayyaf suspects—including Nadzmi Saabdullah aka Kumander Global and Ghalib Andang aka Kumander Robot—may have been cases of summary execution as they were tracked down to their cells and were not involved in the shootout, he said.

"Why did they have to do a cell-to-cell [search] after the assault?" Soriano said.

He said the CHR probe failed to establish whether or not the cell-to-cell killings were on orders of the Reyes-led crisis management team.

"[The assault team] acted beyond the rules of engagement. There is already abuse of authority," Soriano said.

"Now, if the crisis management team ordered the team to eliminate [all the inmates], they have a problem. But we have yet to establish that," he said.

LP council reaffirms Atienza election; it's rump, says Drilon

By Margaux C. Ortiz and TJ Burgonio

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE Council (NECO), the governing body of the Liberal Party (LP), yesterday reaffirmed the election of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza as new LP president during the party's national convention held at the Manila Hotel last March 2 which led to the ouster of Sen. Franklin Drilon as party president.

In a meeting at the Century Park Sheraton Hotel, members of the NECO moved to resolve the leadership dispute in favor of Atienza as LP president and Presidential Chief of Staff Mike Defensor as party chair.

But Drilon's faction branded NECO's meeting called by Atienza's group as "rump."

In a statement, Bukidnon Rep. Nereus Acosta, LP secretary general, said Atienza failed to muster a majority of the 101 NECO members, pointing out that only a handful showed up at the meeting.

He said that only 26 of the 58 NECO members, whom the Atienza group claimed attended the meeting, were legitimate members. Only four of the 12 governors, 12 of the 31 congressmen and three of the 10 mayors identified with the party attended the meeting, he added.

"The small attendance at the Atienza NECO shows the sentiments of the members," Acosta said.

Drilon earlier said that Atienza's convening of the NECO was illegal, arguing that only he, as party president, could do this.

"We hope the NECO decision will settle the issue once and for all so we could move on," Defensor said in a statement.

After the meeting, Atienza said the party was willing to open the doors of reconciliation to Drilon's faction which include Sen. Manuel Roxas II, the grandson of President Manuel A. Roxas, the founder and first president of LP.

But Roxas yesterday insisted that the election was illegal because only Drilon was in a position to call for an election.

"If we could not follow a simple charter of a party or of an organization, then how can we expect to follow greater charters like our Constitution?" Roxas said.

"It's clear that the administration wants to co-opt one of the most credible political parties in the country through the ouster of its duly elected officers," he added.

During the meeting, the NECO members were informed that Drilon committed a long list of violations of the party constitution in dictating positions without consulting other LP members.

According to Roxas, Malacañang conspired with Atienza to conduct an illegal election of officers with the intent of dislodging the incumbent LP officials.

The senator's grandfather, Manuel Roxas, the first president of the Third Philippine Republic, founded the LP on Jan. 19, 1946.

"That the administration is breaking up one of the country's oldest and most respected political parties in the middle of a battle for our civil liberties, and that this is done with the support of Secretary Mike Defensor and other allies of the President, indicates that his (Atienza) desperate maneuver was engineered with the help of the very same people who brought us Calibrated Preemptive Response (CPR), Executive Order 464 and Proclamation 1017," Roxas said in a statement.

As this developed, Caloocan City Councilor Ricojudge "Rj" Echiverri, the son of city mayor Enrico Echiverri was sworn in by Atienza.

But former congressman Edgar Erice said Atienza's action was illegal.

"He had no authority to appoint a new party chair, and as of now I am still the party chair in the city," Erice said in a telephone interview. *With reports from Felipe V. Celino, PDI Visayas Bureau and Nancy Carvajal*

New US envoy reports to GMA

NEW US AMBASSADOR TO MANILA Kristie Kenney yesterday presented her credentials to President Macapagal-Arroyo after promising to continue the close relationship between the two allies.

Kenney, a career diplomat who also served as ambassador to Ecuador, is the first female US envoy to the Philippines, replacing Francis Ricciardone, who became ambassador to Egypt last year.

Ms Arroyo greeted Kenney at the Malacañang Palace, saying, "Welcome to the Philippines. We look forward to working with you," according to an official statement.

Upon her arrival in Manila last week, she told reporters: "This is one of the most special countries for the United States. We have such a long relationship and we feel very close as people."

"We each have the goal of making our democracies strong and stable so that every citizen's vote has meaning," she told the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations during her confirmation hearings in January.

Kenney is likely to face many challenges, including the ongoing political crisis surrounding Ms Arroyo, who quashed an alleged coup plot in January, and the trial of four US Marines accused of raping a Filipino woman after recent counterterrorism exercises.

Prior to Manila, her other postings were as economic counselor at the US mission to International Organizations in Geneva; economic officer at the US embassy in Argentina and consular officer at the US embassy in Jamaica.

Kenney is married to William Brownfield, the US ambassador to Venezuela.

Ms Arroyo said that Kenney told her she wants to visit Mindanao "as soon as possible" after the US envoy presented her credentials.

In a round table discussion with officials on Mindanao development, the President mentioned that Kenney "wanted to go to Mindanao as soon as possible with me." *AP, Christine O. Avendaño*

Solons restore P70-M 'pork'

By Michael Ubac

MEMBERS OF THE House of Representatives will have their pork restored to their original P70 million level after all.

Majority Leader Prospero Nograles announced yesterday that the majority in the chamber had reached a consensus to give each congressman P70 million in Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) this year.

Nograles said he expected the Senate will not be far behind in similarly restoring the senators' pork barrel to P200 million, from the reduced P120 million.

The pork barrel is a provision of the budget to fund the pet projects of congressmen and senators and is known to be a source of kickbacks for many legislators.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had prevailed on the House and Senate members to accept a reduction in their pork barrel to P40 million and P120 million, respectively, in 2004 and 2005 to tame the budget deficit.

But claiming that the fiscal crisis was now over, the House wants a restoration to the original P70 million.

The decision was reached on the eve of the approval of the proposed P1-trillion national budget for 2006.

On orders from Speaker Jose de Venecia, the chamber will work overtime to finish plenary budget deliberations by early Thursday.

Nograles claimed that restoring the PDAF would not entail any additional budgetary allocation or a realignment of the budgets of departments and agencies.

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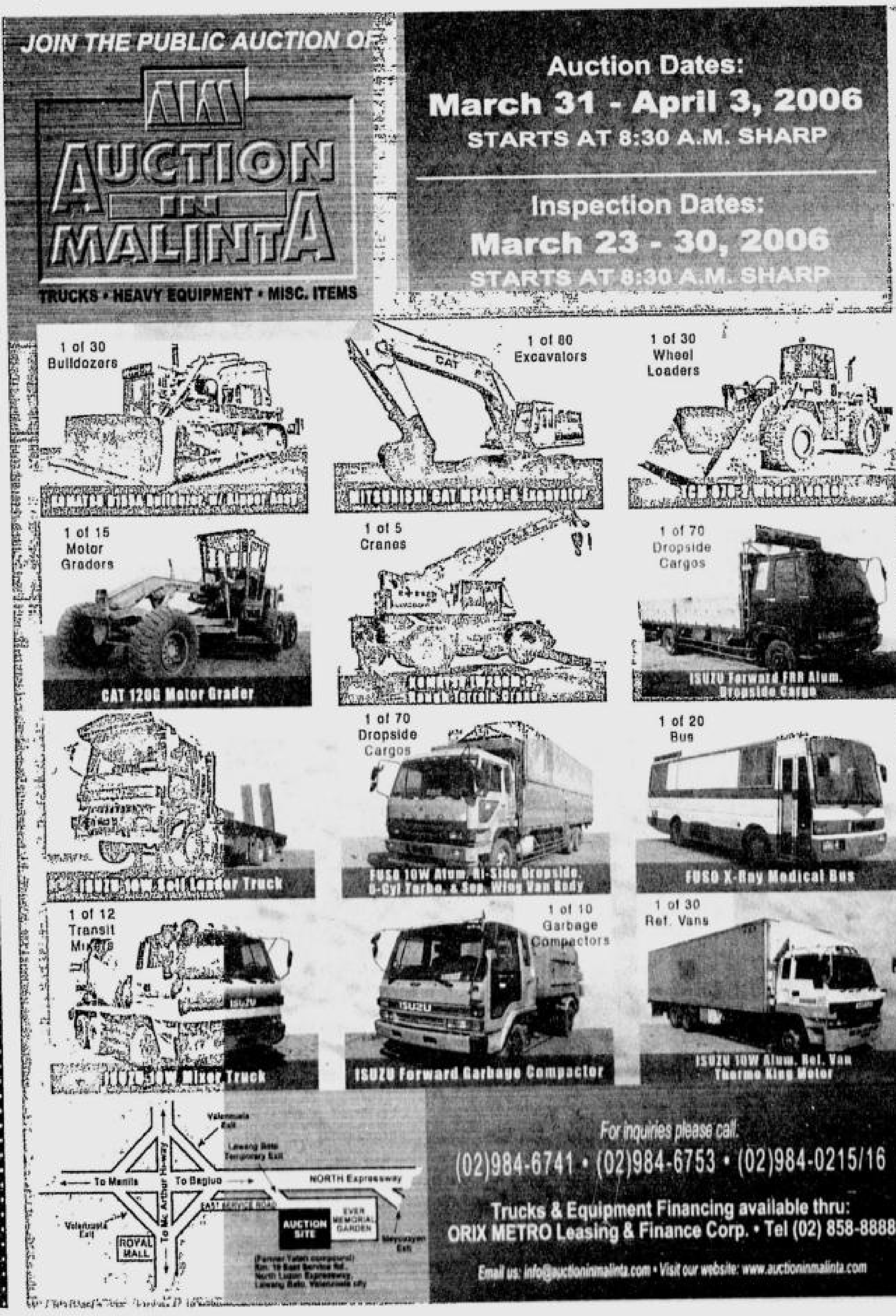
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Oil firms cut gasoline prices but jack up those of diesel, kerosene

RESPONDING TO INTERNATIONAL oil prices, oil firms yesterday reduced gasoline prices by 50 centavos a liter, but jacked up diesel and kerosene prices by the same level.

Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Chevron Philippines Inc., Total (Philippines) Corp., Eastern Petroleum Corp., Flying V and Seaoil Petroleum Corp. all slashed prices of their gasoline products at different times yesterday.

Flying V led the price rollback, implementing its adjustment at 12:01 a.m., followed by Shell and Seaoil at 6 a.m., Chevron at 7 a.m., Total at 10 a.m. and Eastern at 12 noon.

Petron did not specify a time for its rollback, saying only that it had advised its dealers to cut prices yesterday morning.

While gasoline prices fell below the $70-a-barrel mark this month, the prices of diesel and kerosene in the regional market shot up, prompting all the oil firms, except Chevron, to hike diesel and kerosene pump prices.

As with the gasoline price reduction, Flying V was also first to adjust diesel and kerosene prices at 12:01 a.m., followed by Shell at 6 a.m. and Eastern at 12 noon.

Petron, Total and Seaoil jacked up prices of diesel and kerosene at 12:01 a.m. today.

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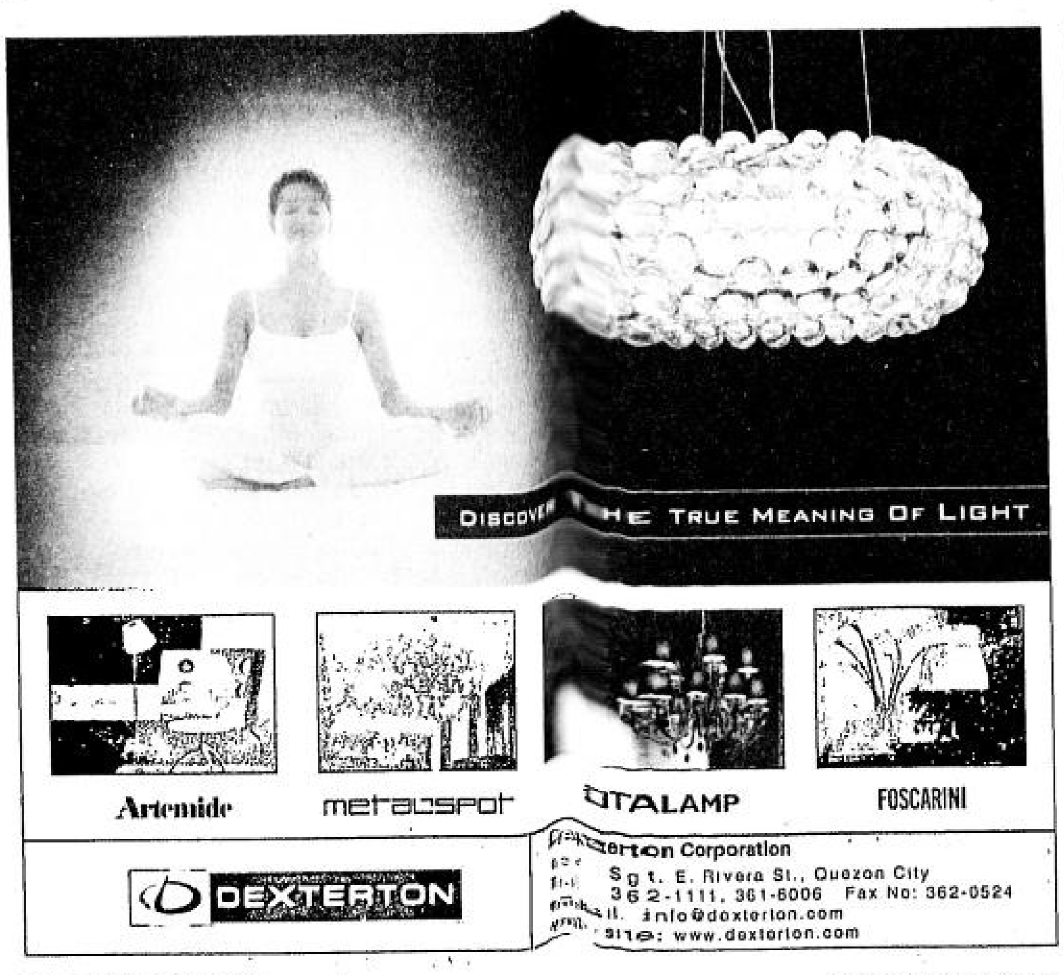

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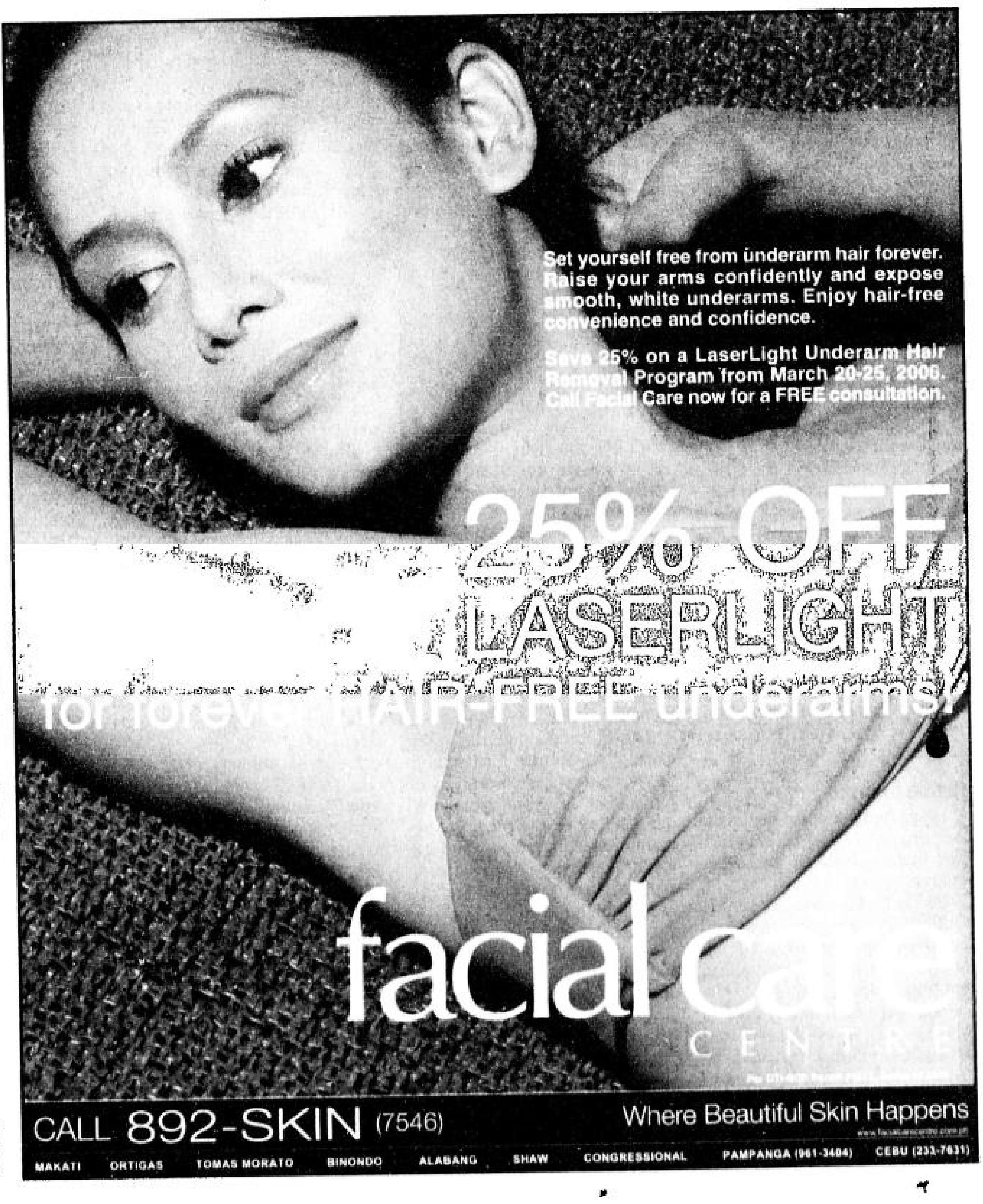
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Garci passport faked, says Bangko Sentral

From page A1

the administration," he said.

Four officers of the BSP Bank Notes and Securities Printing Department based in Quezon City conducted the examination, which was formally requested by the committees only after Garcillano had turned in his two passports—No. BB602533, valid from Nov. 8, 1996, to Nov. 8, 2001, and canceled on Feb. 11, 2002, and No. JJ243816, valid from Feb. 11, 2002, to Feb. 11, 2007.

The two passports had no entry showing that Garcillano had left the Philippines for any other country.

The "Hello Garci" scandal, involving purported wiretapped conversations between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Garcillano, suggested cheating in the 2004 polls.

The scandal triggered the resignations of 10 key officials of the Arroyo administration and threatened to unseat the incumbent.

At one point, Ms Arroyo admitted phoning an election official, apologized for the "lapse in judgment," but denied wrongdoing.

The scandal led to her impeachment in the House, but her allies managed to quash the case.

Contrary to S'pore report

In his three appearances before the House inquiry last year, Garcillano, 68, insisted that he was in the country as the scandal was raging.

His testimony ran contrary to a report by the Singapore government that he stopped in the city-state on July 14 last year en route to a third country.

Garcillano said that during the time he was presumed abroad, he had sought refuge in the homes of Muslim friends in Mindanao, reading and writing his memoirs.

In his testimony, Garcillano maintained his innocence but admitted having talked once with Ms Arroyo at the height of the canvassing of votes.

The opposition said the wiretaps were evidence that Ms Arroyo manipulated the 2004 presidential election, but Garcillano said they proved nothing.

Garcillano said there was nothing to support allegations that he fixed the results to give Ms Arroyo a one-million vote lead over her nearest rival, the movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. (since deceased).

Last December, Domingo Lucenario, assistant secretary for consular affairs of the Department of Foreign Affairs, said that according to DFA records, passport No. JJ243816 was issued on Feb. 11, 2002, to Virgilio Olivar Garcillano Jr. by the DFA regional office in Cagayan de Oro.

Sought yesterday for comment, DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque disclaimed liability: "We cannot guarantee the authenticity of the passport or its genuineness because it is the central bank of the Philippines that prints the blank passports. The DFA only puts the name of the person on the passport.

"It is the central bank that guarantees the authenticity and genuineness of a blank passport. It's up to the central bank to comment on the authenticity or genuineness of a passport.

6 features

"We don't have the expertise to determine the quality of the paper as well as the security features of a passport."

According to the BSP, the six features of the passport that did not conform to standards were:

- Size (123 mm X 85 mm), "smaller than standard," which is 125 mm X 88 mm.
- Inside front cover (data page) and inside back cover: paper and print.
- Stitching: additional stitch along the seam.
- Pages 1 to 32: presence of cuts and joints along the seam which should not have been there.
- Page 32: the text "BISA-VISA" on the upper portion of the page should not have been there.
- Print quality of the text: "*Sakaling maaksidente o mamatay...*" and the lines on Page 32 do not conform to standard.

According to the BSP, it manufactures and delivers blank passport booklets to the DFA.

"The filling in of the applicants' personal data on the passport and the issuance of passports are functions of the DFA," Suratos said in a letter dated March 20, 2006, and addressed to Rep. Emmylou Talino-Santos.

'Not experts'

Both Representatives Santos and Teodoro Locsin, chairs of the House committees on public information and electoral reforms, respectively, refused to use the word "fake" to describe the passport.

"We are not experts to make such conclusions," said Locsin, who said it was up to the Department of Justice to charge Garcillano with perjury and falsification of official documents.

"But how else will you describe it?" Remulla said.

Locsin said the possibility that the passport was irregular was already contained in the committee report.

"It covers all angles. And in the event that there is a finding that the regularity of the passport submitted by Garcillano cannot be sustained, there are recommendations there as to who should be held liable," he said.

Remulla urged the House "to find out" the identities of the civilians and government officials who might have helped Garcillano flee the country.

But Locsin said immigration officials could not be faulted if Garcillano managed to escape via the country's "backdoor."

Solo flight

Locsin told reporters that the BSP findings did not immediately validate the "conspiracy theory" that Malacañang was behind Garcillano's supposed escape to allow him to evade the House inquiry.

"It could be a solo flight," said Locsin.

To which Remulla said: "It's possible that other government agencies may not be involved. Still it compels us to ask more questions, [such as] Who helped him leave the country?"

Santos said the BSP findings had no impact on the committee report that was adopted by the five committees last week.

"We will just adopt the committee report, subject to amendments in the plenary," she said, explaining that it would be up to the whole chamber to amend the report in light of the new revelation.

Santos said the task of the five committees had long been done but that "the other committees [in a separate investigation] can make use of the [BSP findings]."

Locsin said Garcillano's insistence on not leaving the country was "the only clear statement he made."

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The source raised the possibility because two of Honasan's ex-colleagues in the Reform the Armed Forces Movement—Eduardo "Red" Kapunan and Billy Bibit, both retired colonels—are both natives of Capiz.

Thus, the former senator may be in the care of Kapunan's relatives in Mambusao town or Bibit's kin in Barangay Agloway in Panitan, the source said.

But Mohagher Iqbal, chief peace negotiator of the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front, said a physician was hiding Honasan somewhere in North Cotabato.

"We were informed by our reliable informant regarding Honasan's presence two days ago. Our source even gave us the name of the doctor who is keeping him," Igbal told the INQUIRER in Cotabato City.

Iqbal said it was the only information he could share because "Honasan is not our enemy."

"But we are not supporting him either," Iqbal added.

Police had earlier said Honasan was last sighted in the cities of Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro.

He was also reportedly seen early last week in Dumangas town in Iloilo (where he supposedly visited a doctor-friend), as well as in Negros Occidental.

No communication

And just as police were getting hot on his tracks, Honasan disappeared, reports said.

But just as quickly as the speculation was made, businessman Potenciano Kapunan, a cousin of Red Kapunan's, denied that Honasan was in Capiz.

He said Red had ceased to communicate with Honasan since the latter became a senator.

Besides, Red did not support Honasan during the two elections that he ran for senator, Potenciano said.

He added that Bibit, now a collector of the Bureau of Customs, did not support Honasan anymore.

Himself a retired Army colonel, Honasan entered politics after being granted amnesty for leading a series of bloody coup attempts against the Aquino administration in the 1980s.

He disappeared from public view shortly before President Macapagal-Arroyo imposed a weeklong national state of emergency last month.

Honasan, who is facing coup d'etat charges, is the suspected mastermind in the 2003 Oakwood mutiny mounted by the Magdalo group of junior military officers.

He has denied any part in the mutiny. Recently, he was quoted as saying that he would not surrender to authorities.

'Guardian country'

Maj. Gen. Agustin Dema-ala, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said he had dispatched agents to verify reports of Honasan's presence in North Cotabato.

Honasan is one of the founders of the Guardians Brotherhood Movement, which counts civilians, soldiers, policemen and politicians as members. North Cotabato is known as "Guardian country" in Mindanao.

Supt. Federico Dulay, North Cotabato police director, said the police force had always been on high alert against plotters who might seek refuge in the province.

"But as of now, we have no information from members of our intelligence community regarding Honasan's whereabouts in the province," he said.

Dulay said Honasan would be arrested on sight if there was a warrant of arrest for him.

No green light

A week after announcing that it would issue wanted posters of Honasan and six others charged with coup d'etat, the Philippine National Police appeared to have changed its mind.

The PNP yesterday said that higher authorities had yet to give the "green light" to print and distribute the wanted posters.

It offered no explanation, and merely said the matter was still "under process."

After the Department of Interior and Local Government put up the P5-million bounty for Honasan last week, the PNP said it would print some 5,000 wanted posters carrying his photo as well as those of Felix Turingan, Virgilio Briones, Romeo Lazo, Ernesto Macahiya, George Duldulao and Lina Reyes. *Reports from Felipe V. Celino, PDI Visayas Bureau; Jeoffrey Maitem and Dennis Jay C. Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Luige A. del Puerto in Manila*

Senga warns of more coup attempts by Left, Right, rebs

From page A1

members of the Philippine Constitution Association (Philconsa) on Tuesday.

Media blamed

Senga partly blamed the media for portraying rebel military officers and soldiers as "messianic figures."

He said Ms Arroyo's critics "will always find allies in opportunist personalities who will not hesitate to bankroll" plots to oust her from office.

"We were fortunately able to blunt the ever-closer leftist-rightist alliance for the time being ... Now is not the time to relax our vigilance. This alliance has been deepening for over two years now and will not be uprooted in a single stroke," he went on.

Senga complained that their attempt to counter further military uprisings "is further made difficult by the propensity of certain sectors of the media to romanticize erring officers and soldiers, portraying them as messianic figures that they are certainly not."

"This is not helping the AFP heal past wounds of divisiveness and in fact indirectly encourages our younger officers to adopt the wrong values and warp their perspectives," he said.

The military leadership foiled a plan by the Marines, Scout Rangers and the Philippine National Police Special Action Force on Feb. 24 to withdraw support from Ms Arroyo, who has been accused of cheating in the 2004 elections.

Ex-Scout Rangers chief Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and Marine Col. Ariel Querubin disclosed their plan to Senga, apparently hoping to convince him to withdraw support from Ms Arroyo as former AFP Chief of Staff Angelo Reyes did to former President Joseph Estrada in 2001.

Final takeover

Senga said the plan was for military elements to announce a withdrawal of support from the President on Feb. 24 when the Edsa People Power II anniversary rallies would have reached a "critical mass," then they would march on Malacañang and hold vigil there.

"[Then] the real plan would unfold: Sympathetic units from the AFP would make military strikes that would allow the plotters to seize power, culminating in a final takeover of the seat of government," Senga said in his speech.

To reports he was offered to head the so-called transition government after Ms Arroyo's ouster, Senga declared he would never agree to such a setup.

"I will resist the establishment of a "military caretaker government" or a "transition council" even at the cost of my own life, if that is what circumstance demands of me," he said.

"I am not so presumptuous as to believe that I know what is best for this country, not do I believe I know who does, outside free elections. The military leadership are neither kings nor kingmakers," he went on.

Senga said the military should never again intervene in the nation's political troubles, bringing to mind how the AFP chief of staff's withdrawal of support from Estrada allowed then Vice President Arroyo to assume the presidency in 2001.

Never again

"Never again will the AFP be used for ulterior political motives," vowed Senga, who was the military spokesperson in 2001.

He said the military should stick to the chain of command to avoid the "nightmare" of soldiers shooting each other, which happened in the 1989 coup d'etat staged by the Young Officers Union led by Lim and Querubin. Rebel Marines shot at fellow Marines in the Camp Aguinaldo siege.

"It was the bloodiest incident in the 1989 coup attempt. That incident must not happen again. It should never happen again," stressed Senga, as he vowed to prosecute those involved in the Feb. 24 foiled coup before military and civilian courts.

Lim and Querubin and other YOU rebels were granted amnesty in 1995 along with the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) rebels led by ex-Col. Gregorio Honasan.

PCGG dragging its feet on coco levy, farmers say

By Alcuin Papa

MILITANT PEASANT GROUPS accused the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) of dragging its feet in defending the government's claim to the coconut levy funds and ultimately the interest of the country's coconut farmers.

They strongly opposed a petition by controversial businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco asking the Sandiganbayan to be allowed to sell P6 billion worth of disputed shares in food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp. that were bought with the levy funds.

The PCGG yesterday said it would file with the court a comment on the Cojuangco petition, which the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court has set for hearing today.

But according to Willy Marbella, the internal deputy secretary general of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), what the PCGG should do is to immediately file an opposition to Cojuangco's petition if it is really serious about defending the interest of the coconut farmers.

"The PCGG has already surrendered the coco levy funds to Danding. They should have been vigilant and be proactive, not reactive," said Marbella.

Marbella believes that the "master plan" of the PCGG after all was really to shoot for a compromise agreement for the coco levy funds now estimated to amount to P120 billion.

"All their efforts seem to indicate they are probably pushing a compromise deal. That's their thrust right now and they would not move an inch to jeopardize a compromise agreement," he said.

PCGG chair Camilo Sabio yesterday claimed the PCGG commissioners had already heard of Cojuangco's plan and were planning to submit their comment today before the anti-graft court.

"The Office of the Solicitor General will issue a comment for us to the Sandiganbayan on our side on March 23 when they appear for the hearing," Sabio said.

But he declined to reveal their arguments saying they did not want to telegraph their punches to the Cojuangco camp.

"Better hear the comment tomorrow. It's a good one and was decided upon with wise thoughts," Sabio said.

In the petition filed last Thursday, Cojuangco, who chairs San Miguel, asked for permission to sell 73.3 million San Miguel shares ostensibly to pay off P6 billion worth of loans ostensibly incurred by 14 so-called "coco levy-funded" corporations to the United Coconut Planters Bank and the Bank of Commerce.

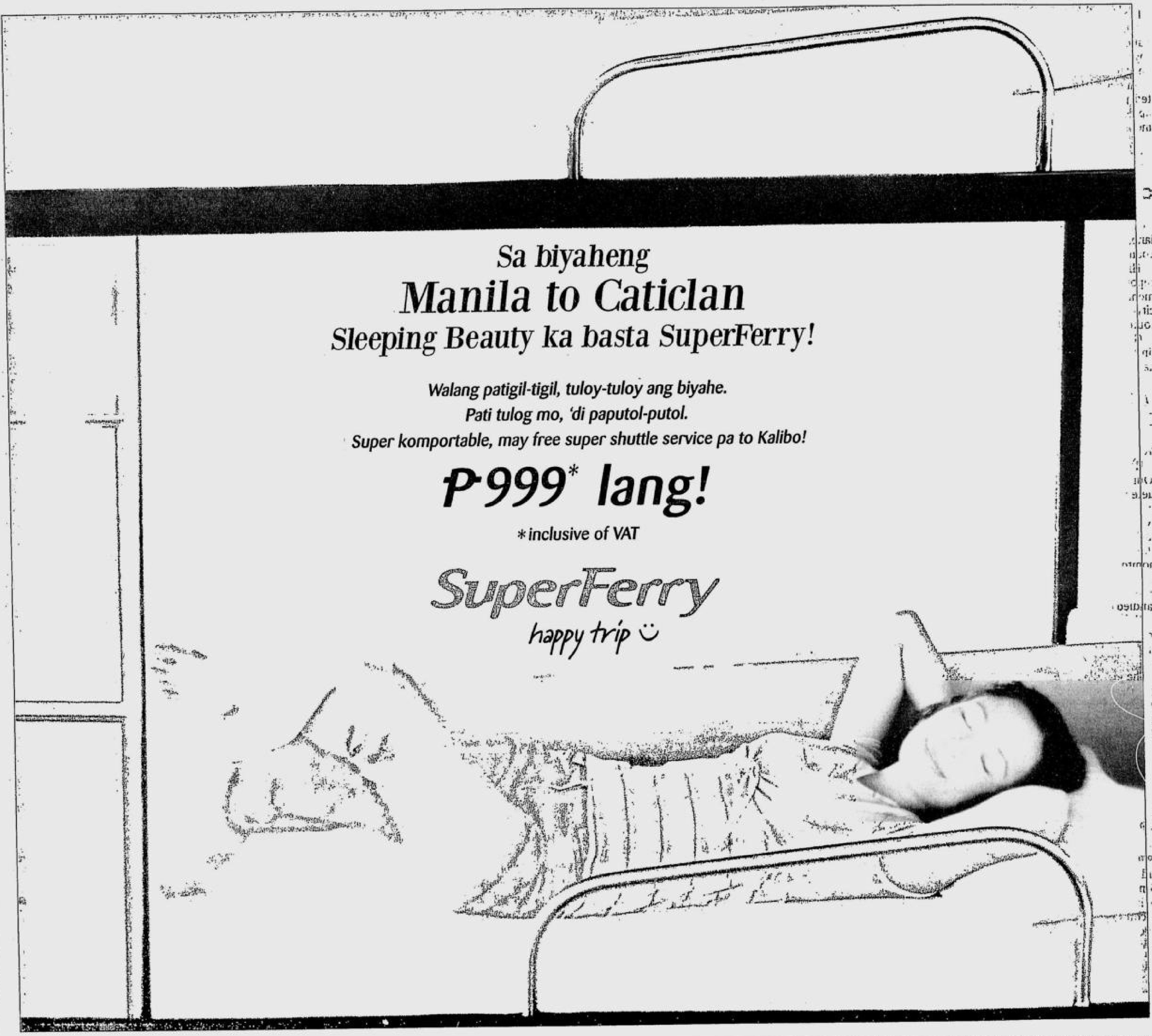
The 73.3 million shares that Cojuangco is proposing to sell comprise 13.33 percent of the 20-percent block of San Miguel shares whose ownership is still under dispute. Although the Sandiganbayan allowed Cojuangco to vote the shares, he is not allowed to sell them while their ownership has not been settled.

The 20 percent is part of of the 47-percent block of San Miguel shares that the government sequestered in 1986 on the ground that they were bought with coco levy funds. The levy was a forced tax collected between 1973 and 1982 through a decree issued by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The government claims that Cojuangco, who was administrator of the levy, had with his associates used the levy funds to buy shares in San Miguel, the United Coconut Planters Bank, and various coconut trading firms, coconut oil mills and export firms.

These acquired assets were not placed in the name of the Philippine Coconut Authority but under 14 holding companies under the Coconut Industry Investment Fund owned by six oil mills. These assets were held by the UCPB, the CIIF administrator.

The Supreme Court in 2001 ruled that the coco levy funds were prima facie public funds. The Sandiganbayan in 2003 declared the levy funds were conclusively public funds held by government in trust for the coconut farmers.



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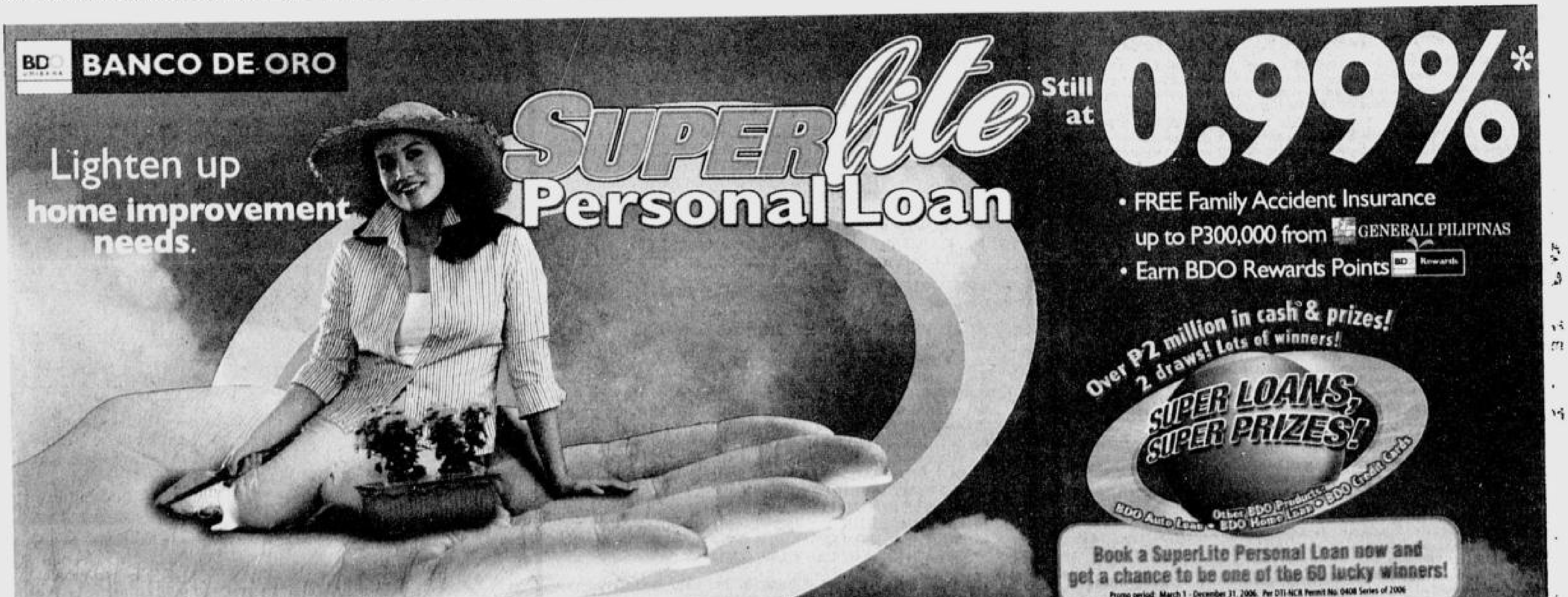

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Garci passport faked, says Bangko Sentral

From page A1

the administration," he said.

Four officers of the BSP Bank Notes and Securities Printing Department based in Quezon City conducted the examination, which was formally requested by the committees only after Garcillano had turned in his two passports—No. BB602533, valid from Nov. 8, 1996, to Nov. 8, 2001, and canceled on Feb. 11, 2002, and No. JJ243816, valid from Feb. 11, 2002, to Feb. 11, 2007.

The two passports had no entry showing that Garcillano had left the Philippines for any other country.

The "Hello Garci" scandal, involving purported wiretapped conversations between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Garcillano, suggested cheating in the 2004 polls.

The scandal triggered the resignations of 10 key officials of the Arroyo administration and threatened to unseat the incumbent.

At one point, Ms Arroyo admitted phoning an election official, apologized for the "lapse in judgment," but denied wrongdoing.

The scandal led to her impeachment in the House, but her allies managed to quash the case.

Contrary to S'pore report

In his three appearances before the House inquiry last year, Garcillano, 68, insisted that he was in the country as the scandal was raging.

His testimony ran contrary to a report by the Singapore government that he stopped in the city-state on July 14 last year en route to a third country.

Garcillano said that during the time he was presumed abroad, he had sought refuge in the homes of Muslim friends in Mindanao, reading and writing his memoirs.

In his testimony, Garcillano maintained his innocence but admitted having talked once with Ms Arroyo at the height of the canvassing of votes.

The opposition said the wiretaps were evidence that Ms Arroyo manipulated the 2004 presidential election, but Garcillano said they proved nothing.

Garcillano said there was nothing to support allegations that he fixed the results to give Ms Arroyo a one-million vote lead over her nearest rival, the movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. (since deceased).

Last December, Domingo Lucenario, assistant secretary for consular affairs of the Department of Foreign Affairs, said that according to DFA records, passport No. JJ243816 was issued on Feb. 11, 2002, to Virgilio Olivar Garcillano Jr. by the DFA regional office in Cagayan de Oro.

Sought yesterday for comment, DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque disclaimed liability: "We cannot guarantee the authenticity of the passport or its genuineness because it is the central bank of the Philippines that prints the blank passports. The DFA only puts the name of the person on the passport.

"It is the central bank that guarantees the authenticity and genuineness of a blank passport. It's up to the central bank to comment on the authenticity or genuineness of a passport.

6 features

"We don't have the expertise to determine the quality of the paper as well as the security features of a passport."

According to the BSP, the six features of the passport that did not conform to standards were:

- Size (123 mm X 85 mm), "smaller than standard," which is 125 mm X 88 mm.
- Inside front cover (data page) and inside back cover: paper and print.
- Stitching: additional stitch along the seam.
- Pages 1 to 32: presence of cuts and joints along the seam which should not have been there.
- Page 32: the text "BISA-VISA" on the upper portion of the page should not have been there.
- Print quality of the text: "*Sakaling maaksidente o mamatay...*" and the lines on Page 32 do not conform to standard.

According to the BSP, it manufactures and delivers blank passport booklets to the DFA.

"The filling in of the applicants' personal data on the passport and the issuance of passports are functions of the DFA," Suratos said in a letter dated March 20, 2006, and addressed to Rep. Emmylou Talino-Santos.

'Not experts'

Both Representatives Santos and Teodoro Locsin, chairs of the House committees on public information and electoral reforms, respectively, refused to use the word "fake" to describe the passport.

"We are not experts to make such conclusions," said Locsin, who said it was up to the Department of Justice to charge Garcillano with perjury and falsification of official documents.

"But how else will you describe it?" Remulla said.

Locsin said the possibility that the passport was irregular was already contained in the committee report.

"It covers all angles. And in the event that there is a finding that the regularity of the passport submitted by Garcillano cannot be sustained, there are recommendations there as to who should be held liable," he said.

Remulla urged the House "to find out" the identities of the civilians and government officials who might have helped Garcillano flee the country.

But Locsin said immigration officials could not be faulted if Garcillano managed to escape via the country's "backdoor."

Solo flight

Locsin told reporters that the BSP findings did not immediately validate the "conspiracy theory" that Malacañang was behind Garcillano's supposed escape to allow him to evade the House inquiry.

"It could be a solo flight," said Locsin.

To which Remulla said: "It's possible that other government agencies may not be involved. Still it compels us to ask more questions, [such as] Who helped him leave the country?"

Santos said the BSP findings had no impact on the committee report that was adopted by the five committees last week.

"We will just adopt the committee report, subject to amendments in the plenary," she said, explaining that it would be up to the whole chamber to amend the report in light of the new revelation.

Santos said the task of the five committees had long been done but that "the other committees [in a separate investigation] can make use of the [BSP findings]."

Locsin said Garcillano's insistence on not leaving the country was "the only clear statement he made."

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Thus, the former senator may be in the care of Kapunan's relatives in Mambusao town or Bibit's kin in Barangay Agloway in Panitan, the source said.

But Mohagher Iqbal, chief peace negotiator of the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front, said a physician was hiding Honasan somewhere in North Cotabato.

"We were informed by our reliable informant regarding Honasan's presence two days ago. Our source even gave us the name of the doctor who is keeping him," Igbal told the INQUIRER in Cotabato City.

Iqbal said it was the only information he could share because "Honasan is not our enemy."

"But we are not supporting him either," Iqbal added.

Police had earlier said Honasan was last sighted in the cities of Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro.

He was also reportedly seen early last week in Dumangas town in Iloilo (where he supposedly visited a doctor-friend), as well as in Negros Occidental.

No communication

And just as police were getting hot on his tracks, Honasan disappeared, reports said.

But just as quickly as the speculation was made, businessman Potenciano Kapunan, a cousin of Red Kapunan's, denied that Honasan was in Capiz.

He said Red had ceased to communicate with Honasan since the latter became a senator.

Besides, Red did not support Honasan during the two elections that he ran for senator, Potenciano said.

He added that Bibit, now a collector of the Bureau of Customs, did not support Honasan anymore.

Himself a retired Army colonel, Honasan entered politics after being granted amnesty for leading a series of bloody coup attempts against the Aquino administration in the 1980s.

He disappeared from public view shortly before President Macapagal-Arroyo imposed a weeklong national state of emergency last month.

Honasan, who is facing coup d'etat charges, is the suspected mastermind in the 2003 Oakwood mutiny mounted by the Magdalo group of junior military officers.

He has denied any part in the mutiny. Recently, he was quoted as saying that he would not surrender to authorities.

'Guardian country'

Maj. Gen. Agustin Dema-ala, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said he had dispatched agents to verify reports of Honasan's presence in North Cotabato.

Honasan is one of the founders of the Guardians Brotherhood Movement, which counts civilians, soldiers, policemen and politicians as members. North Cotabato is known as "Guardian country" in Mindanao.

Supt. Federico Dulay, North Cotabato police director, said the police force had always been on high alert against plotters who might seek refuge in the province.

"But as of now, we have no information from members of our intelligence community regarding Honasan's whereabouts in the province," he said.

Dulay said Honasan would be arrested on sight if there was a warrant of arrest for him.

No green light

A week after announcing that it would issue wanted posters of Honasan and six others charged with coup d'etat, the Philippine National Police appeared to have changed its mind.

The PNP yesterday said that higher authorities had yet to give the "green light" to print and distribute the wanted posters.

It offered no explanation, and merely said the matter was still "under process."

After the Department of Interior and Local Government put up the P5-million bounty for Honasan last week, the PNP said it would print some 5,000 wanted posters carrying his photo as well as those of Felix Turingan, Virgilio Briones, Romeo Lazo, Ernesto Macahiya, George Duldulao and Lina Reyes. *Reports from Felipe V. Celino, PDI Visayas Bureau; Jeoffrey Maitem and Dennis Jay C. Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Luige A. del Puerto in Manila*

Senga warns of more coup attempts by Left, Right, rebs

From page A1

members of the Philippine Constitution Association (Philconsa) on Tuesday.

Media blamed

Senga partly blamed the media for portraying rebel military officers and soldiers as "messianic figures."

He said Ms Arroyo's critics "will always find allies in opportunist personalities who will not hesitate to bankroll" plots to oust her from office.

"We were fortunately able to blunt the ever-closer leftist-rightist alliance for the time being ... Now is not the time to relax our vigilance. This alliance has been deepening for over two years now and will not be uprooted in a single stroke," he went on.

Senga complained that their attempt to counter further military uprisings "is further made difficult by the propensity of certain sectors of the media to romanticize erring officers and soldiers, portraying them as messianic figures that they are certainly not."

"This is not helping the AFP heal past wounds of divisiveness and in fact indirectly encourages our younger officers to adopt the wrong values and warp their perspectives," he said.

The military leadership foiled a plan by the Marines, Scout Rangers and the Philippine National Police Special Action Force on Feb. 24 to withdraw support from Ms Arroyo, who has been accused of cheating in the 2004 elections.

Ex-Scout Rangers chief Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and Marine Col. Ariel Querubin disclosed their plan to Senga, apparently hoping to convince him to withdraw support from Ms Arroyo as former AFP Chief of Staff Angelo Reyes did to former President Joseph Estrada in 2001.

Final takeover

Senga said the plan was for military elements to announce a withdrawal of support from the President on Feb. 24 when the Edsa People Power II anniversary rallies would have reached a "critical mass," then they would march on Malacañang and hold vigil there.

"[Then] the real plan would unfold: Sympathetic units from the AFP would make military strikes that would allow the plotters to seize power, culminating in a final takeover of the seat of government," Senga said in his speech.

To reports he was offered to head the so-called transition government after Ms Arroyo's ouster, Senga declared he would never agree to such a setup.

"I will resist the establishment of a "military caretaker government" or a "transition council" even at the cost of my own life, if that is what circumstance demands of me," he said.

"I am not so presumptuous as to believe that I know what is best for this country, not do I believe I know who does, outside free elections. The military leadership are neither kings nor kingmakers," he went on.

Senga said the military should never again intervene in the nation's political troubles, bringing to mind how the AFP chief of staff's withdrawal of support from Estrada allowed then Vice President Arroyo to assume the presidency in 2001.

Never again

"Never again will the AFP be used for ulterior political motives," vowed Senga, who was the military spokesperson in 2001.

He said the military should stick to the chain of command to avoid the "nightmare" of soldiers shooting each other, which happened in the 1989 coup d'etat staged by the Young Officers Union led by Lim and Querubin. Rebel Marines shot at fellow Marines in the Camp Aguinaldo siege.

"It was the bloodiest incident in the 1989 coup attempt. That incident must not happen again. It should never happen again," stressed Senga, as he vowed to prosecute those involved in the Feb. 24 foiled coup before military and civilian courts.

Lim and Querubin and other YOU rebels were granted amnesty in 1995 along with the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) rebels led by ex-Col. Gregorio Honasan.

PCGG dragging its feet on coco levy, farmers say

By Alcuin Papa

MILITANT PEASANT GROUPS accused the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) of dragging its feet in defending the government's claim to the coconut levy funds and ultimately the interest of the country's coconut farmers.

They strongly opposed a petition by controversial businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco asking the Sandiganbayan to be allowed to sell P6 billion worth of disputed shares in food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp. that were bought with the levy funds.

The PCGG yesterday said it would file with the court a comment on the Cojuangco petition, which the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court has set for hearing today.

But according to Willy Marbella, the internal deputy secretary general of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), what the PCGG should do is to immediately file an opposition to Cojuangco's petition if it is really serious about defending the interest of the coconut farmers.

"The PCGG has already surrendered the coco levy funds to Danding. They should have been vigilant and be proactive, not reactive," said Marbella.

Marbella believes that the "master plan" of the PCGG after all was really to shoot for a compromise agreement for the coco levy funds now estimated to amount to P120 billion.

"All their efforts seem to indicate they are probably pushing a compromise deal. That's their thrust right now and they would not move an inch to jeopardize a compromise agreement," he said.

PCGG chair Camilo Sabio yesterday claimed the PCGG commissioners had already heard of Cojuangco's plan and were planning to submit their comment today before the anti-graft court.

"The Office of the Solicitor General will issue a comment for us to the Sandiganbayan on our side on March 23 when they appear for the hearing," Sabio said.

But he declined to reveal their arguments saying they did not want to telegraph their punches to the Cojuangco camp.

"Better hear the comment tomorrow. It's a good one and was decided upon with wise thoughts," Sabio said.

In the petition filed last Thursday, Cojuangco, who chairs San Miguel, asked for permission to sell 73.3 million San Miguel shares ostensibly to pay off P6 billion worth of loans ostensibly incurred by 14 so-called "coco levy-funded" corporations to the United Coconut Planters Bank and the Bank of Commerce.

The 73.3 million shares that Cojuangco is proposing to sell comprise 13.33 percent of the 20-percent block of San Miguel shares whose ownership is still under dispute. Although the Sandiganbayan allowed Cojuangco to vote the shares, he is not allowed to sell them while their ownership has not been settled.

The 20 percent is part of of the 47-percent block of San Miguel shares that the government sequestered in 1986 on the ground that they were bought with coco levy funds. The levy was a forced tax collected between 1973 and 1982 through a decree issued by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The government claims that Cojuangco, who was administrator of the levy, had with his associates used the levy funds to buy shares in San Miguel, the United Coconut Planters Bank, and various coconut trading firms, coconut oil mills and export firms.

These acquired assets were not placed in the name of the Philippine Coconut Authority but under 14 holding companies under the Coconut Industry Investment Fund owned by six oil mills. These assets were held by the UCPB, the CIIF administrator.

The Supreme Court in 2001 ruled that the coco levy funds were prima facie public funds. The Sandiganbayan in 2003 declared the levy funds were conclusively public funds held by government in trust for the coconut farmers.

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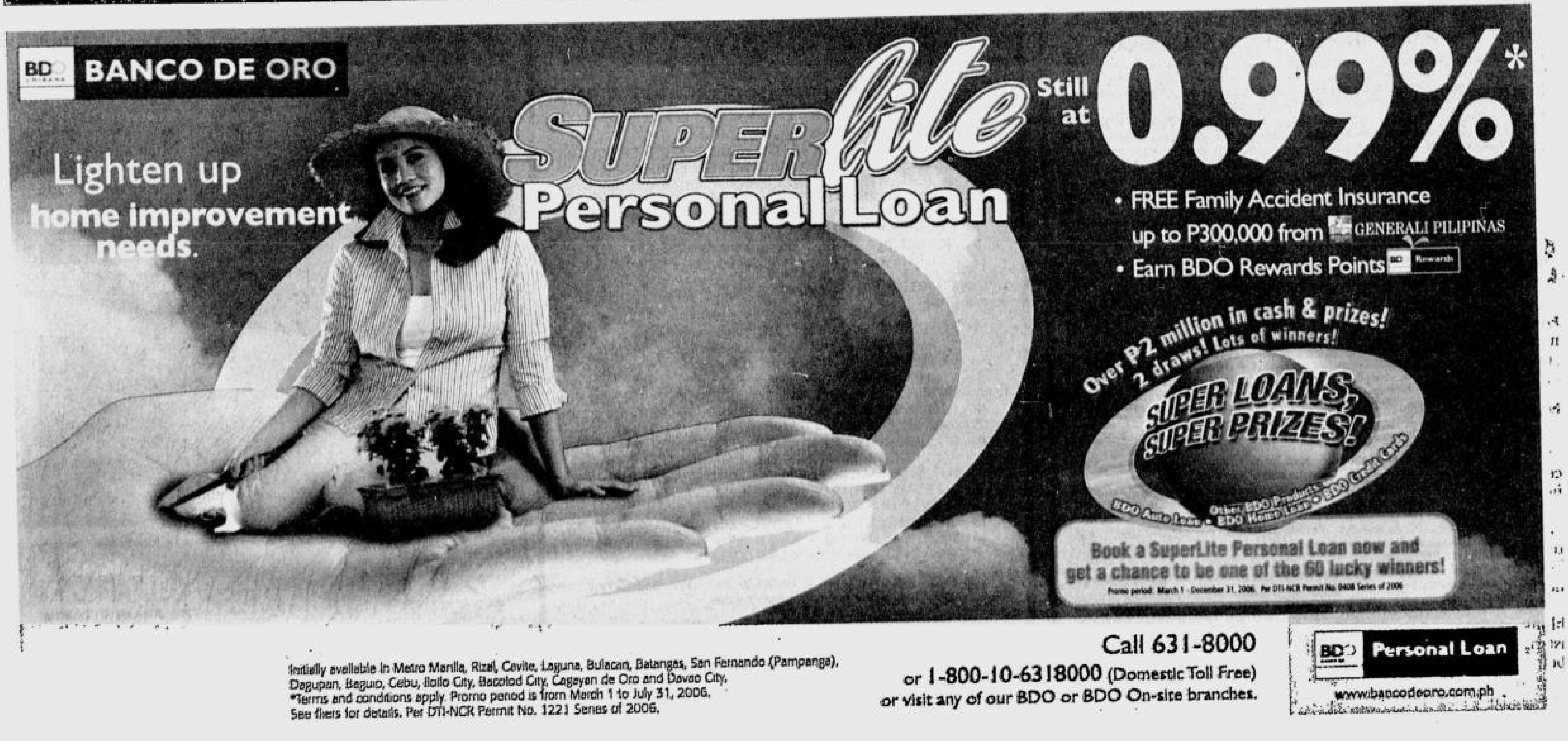
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Palace to regulate all gov't ad budgets

From page A1

entire government's advertising budget, "what is more important is coordination of all mass media initiatives." Bunye claimed to have read the EO only once.

INQUIRER research showed that the national government, excluding GFIs and GOCCs, racked up P341.7 million in advertising expenses based on the 2005 national budget.

An industry executive who monitors ad spending said the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) are among the top 20 ad spenders in the country, both private and government.

INQUIRER Research also found that in 2004, the PCSO had an ad budget of P444.8 million; Pagcor, P125.9 million, but it also had P194.3 million in PR expenses and P1.1 billion in marketing expenses.

GSIS had an ad budget of only P5.2 million but it also had P151.9 million in PR expenses.

The ad budgets of other government agencies are Philippine Tourism Authority, P121.3 million; Home Development Mutual Fund, P112.7 million; Philippine International Trading Corp., P7.9 million; Trade & Investment Development Corp. of the Philippines, P6.9 million; Center for International Trade Expositions & Missions, P6.6 million; and National Food Authority, P5.9 million.

National Home Mortgage Finance Corp., P3.2 million; People's Television Network, P2.8 million; Manila International Airport Authority, P1.9 million; Bases Conversion Development Authority, P1.4 million; Technology & Livelihood Resource Center, P1.2 million; Cultural Center of the Philippines, P1.1 million; and Philippine Ports Authority, P1.0 million.

Worse than PDI

"It's worse than the [INQUIRER] ad boycott by Erap," he said, referring to the boycott of the INQUIRER in 1999 by movie producers at the behest of then President Joseph Estrada. "This is more far-reaching."

On July 8, 1999, Estrada goaded movie producers into pulling out their ads from the INQUIRER by promising to grant their request for tax incentives, saying that the newspaper had been "terribly unfair" to him.

BUNYE: Important to coordinate media initiative

PIMENTEL: Worse than PDI ad boycott

The producers agreed. Shortly after, government corporations followed suit. By the end of the month, half of the paper's top 10 advertisers had left.

Under pressure from the Palace, big businesses also joined the boycott which lasted for five months.

[The ad boycott cost the INQUIRER tens of millions of pesos in forgone revenues.]

Propaganda machine

EO 511 is part of the on-going rationalization of Malacañang's propaganda machine with the Communication Group taking over the functions and assets of the Office of the Communication Director.

Remonde will broaden his reach to include not only radio and television broadcasting but also print media with his takeover of the Philippine News Agency.

The President has vested the Communication Group with the power to "call upon any office in the executive branch, including GFIs and GOCCs, for such assistance as may be necessary in the performance of its functions.

Muzzling media

Ms Arroyo has likewise given the Communication Group the right to dip into the funds of the Office of the Press Secretary, Philippine Information Agency, government mass media organizations, GFIs and GOCCs.

The Palace order comes in the wake of the furor over the government's high-profile attempts to control the media that began with the police raid on The Daily Tribune and Abante shortly after Ms Arroyo placed the country under a state of emergency on Feb. 24.

At the Senate inquiry into the acts carried out by the authorities during the weeklong state of emergency, attempts by Malacañang to censor a large broadcast network and harass a group of journalists writing in-depth stories on anomalies surfaced.

'Call from gov't official'

ABS-CBN executives had reported getting a call from a government official to stop airing the Feb. 26 standoff at the Marine headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, while the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) claimed a government civilian agent tried twice to apply for a warrant to search its premises in Quezon City.

Last week, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the government was monitoring the PCIJ because it posted on its website audio files of the "Hello Garci" tapes and other materials, which he considered "inciting to sedition."

The "Hello Garci" tapes are wiretapped conversations between Ms Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, which, according to the opposition, showed that she rigged the 2004 presidential election. Ms Arroyo has denied stealing the election.

Policy to blunt criticisms

Pimentel said the new order could be part of Malacañang's emerging policy to blunt scathing criticisms of the administration from a broad spectrum of society, including the media.

"It is in furtherance to control avenues of information and flow of government information," he said in the interview.

"She is indeed running amuck. It's a manifestation that the President will not stop at anything to effect her control over a population that she is terrorizing."

The senator said he was also verifying if the executive order had placed government corporations under the Office of the President.

"What is more critical here is if that government-owned and-controlled corporations, which theoretically are not under the Office of the President, are now being controlled by the President through this executive order," he said.

The senator has yet to obtain a copy of the order.

Bulusan volcano spews ash, more explosions expected

From page A1

utes and was accompanied by an earthquake.

Resident volcanologist Bella Tubianosa said that due to the westward wind direction, only Barangays Cogon, Tinampo, Gulang and Bolos in Irosin town and Barangays Bacolod, Sapa, Sangkayon and Biriran in Juban town were covered by the ash fall.

More explosions

"Phivolcs expects more explosions to occur in view of the volcano's recent reactivation," the agency said in its bulletin issued at 8 a.m. yesterday.

An explosion-type earthquake accompanied the explosion at 10:58 p.m., but three more earthquakes followed at 11:30 p.m., 11:32 p.m. and 11:37 p.m.

"Technically, it's an eruption, although it's only an ash explosion since the materials spewed were mostly ash and not pyroclastic ones," Ed Laguerta, Mount Mayon resident volcanologist who is based in Legazpi City in Albay, said late yesterday afternoon.

Laguerta, who went to Bulusan to assist in monitoring activities, said there was not much hazard or threat to life at present but only inconvenience to local residents, except for those near the crater.

'One-shot deal'

He said no succeeding activity had yet taken place after Tuesday's ash explosion. Bulusan usually exhibits a "one-shot deal"—meaning, once it explodes, it will take days before another activity occurs, he said.

Laguerta noted the reactivation of certain fissures down the slopes, as manifested by smoke emissions.

Tubianosa said the ash ejection was preceded by at least 63 volcanic quakes and a loud grumbling.

Phivolcs warned people to stay away from areas within 4 km of the crater that has been designated as a permanent danger zone (PDZ). The zone, which covers portions of Juban, Barcelona, Bulusan and Irosin towns, is off-limits to the public because this will be affected by sudden explosions.

Nearby communities near the zone have been warned against more ash explosions that could generate life-threatening volcanic flows.

At 6 a.m. yesterday, the Phivolcs' seismic network around Bulusan recorded 18 low-frequency volcanic earthquakes, 41 high-frequency ones, and four explosion-type earthquakes. High-frequency earthquakes are caused by the breaking of rocks, while low-frequency earthquakes are those caused by the movement of fluid or gas.

24-hour vigil

"What we are warning against are the more dangerous kinds of explosion," Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum said. Hazardous eruption is characterized by tall eruption columns, pyroclastic flows moving down the slope, and lava flows.

Tubianosa said she could not yet tell if the volcano's situation would still worsen but her office was keeping a 24-hour vigil.

Aerial survey

Arnel Capili, regional director of the Office of Civil Defense, said an aerial survey of the volcano would be conducted today.

On Sunday, the Phivolcs raised Alert Level 1 in Bulusan after recording 73 high-frequency volcanic earthquakes, much higher than the usual five volcanic quakes in 24 hours. The next day, its seismic network recorded 58 volcanic earthquakes, compelling the agency to issue a warning on a possible explosion, which occurred Tuesday night.

"These are phreatic explosions, which are a precursor to an eruption ... These indicate volcanic unrest," Phivolcs volcanology officer-in-charge Jaime Sincioco said in a phone interview.

Sincioco said his office was treating the explosion as phreatic. This type of explosion occurs when water impounded in the crater flows into the cracks and meets the hot rocks, converting it to steam.

Disaster council

Yesterday, Gov. Raul Lee immediately called the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council to a meeting to assess the situation and prepare for any eventualities.

Lee asked the Department of Education to make available its classrooms in the affected areas and even in towns that might be hit by ash fall for possible evacuation.

He mobilized the Philippine Army, Philippine National Police and the Bureau of Fire Protection to clean up the national highway.

Bulusan, 43 km south of the capital city of Sorsogon, is one of the country's 22 active volcanoes. The Phivolcs defines "active" as those that have erupted in the last 500 years.

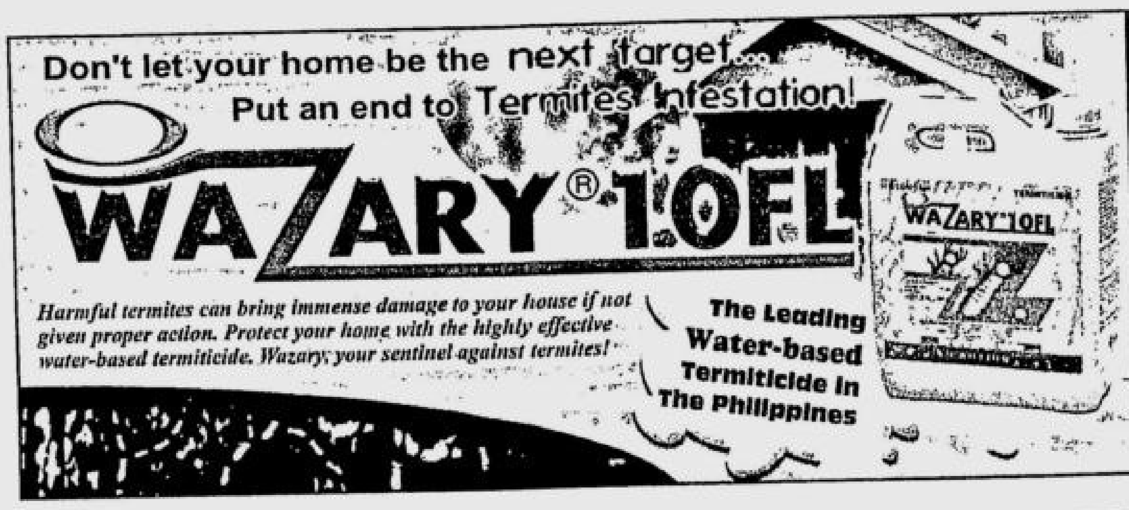
Before Tuesday's ash explosion, Bulusan's last activities were recorded from Nov. 27, 1994 to January 1995. It only caused ash fall in villages in Bulusan, Barcelona, Casiguran, Juban, Irosin and Gubat towns and was accompanied by at least 14 minutes of weak tremor.

The Philippines lies in an area in the Pacific basin that is vulnerable to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Mt. Pinatubo

Mount Pinatubo in Central Luzon erupted in 1991 in the century's biggest blast, burying dozens of villages under tons of mud after lying dormant for 600 years.

More than 800 people died in the wake of Pinatubo's eruption, mostly from diseases in overcrowded evacuation camps. *With reports from PDI Research, Reuters and AP*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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS (BSP), through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites consultants to apply for eligibility and shortlisting and if found eligible and shortlisted, to bid for **the Architectural and Engineering (A & E) Services for the proposed audit and investigation of the various buildings and utilities at the BSP Main Complex.**

The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) for this consultancy services is **P10 Million.**

The scope of the work includes, among others, the preparation of plans, specifications and detailed estimates to include architectural, electrical, mechanical, structural, electronics and communication, plumbing/sanitary and landscaping works as specified in the Terms of Reference.

The list of minimum eligibility requirements is indicated in the Eligibility Form. Eligibility of prospective bidders shall be checked using a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Shortlisting of eligible consultants (top five [5] shall be considered) will be done based on the following criteria:

1.0 The firm must have been in operation for the last ten (10) years (reckoned from the date of the first advertisement/posting of this Invitation) engaging in the lawful practice of the type of consulting services called for in this invitation.

2.0 The firm must have rendered within the last ten (10) years (reckoned from the date of the first advertisement/posting of this Invitation) **A and E Design Consultancy Services** for at least three (3) completed new construction projects of similar nature like office buildings, banks, exchanges and financial institutions of similar or greater magnitude as the proposed BSP project and must be able to submit a certification of satisfactory performance from the client for at least two (2) of the required three (3) projects.

3.0 The Principal or Managing Officer must be a Registered Architect with at least fifteen (15) years experience in architectural design and coordinating team efforts in A & E Consultancy Services.

4.0 The key personnel should be Registered Architect/s, Civil Engineer/s, Professional Mechanical Engineer/s and Professional Electrical Engineer/s with at least ten (10) years design experience.

5.0 The firm (partnership/corporation/joint venture) must be at least 60% owned by a Filipino citizen (Foreign consultants must be registered with SEC and/or any agency authorized by the laws of the Philippines)

6.0 For those firms with previous or current Consultancy Services with the BSP, a certificate of satisfactory performance issued by the Bank must be submitted.

The quality-cost based evaluation procedure stipulated in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA No. 9184 shall be adopted for this consultancy service requirement.

Eligibility documents may be obtained from the BAC Secretariat on 16 March to 31 March 2006 upon submission of a letter of intent and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P500.00, Room 212, 2nd Floor, Five Storey Building at the BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Streets, Manila and must be submitted duly accomplished to the same office not later than 2:00 p.m. on 04 April 2006.

Bid documents may be available only to shortlisted bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **P5,000.00** to the BSP Cashier.

The provisions of **Republic Act No. 9184** and its Implementing Rules and Regulations relative to the bidding and award of contract shall apply.

BSP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive defect or any formality therein, or accept such bid or award any part thereof to any consultant/s whose bid/s is/are evaluated to be most advantageous to BSP. Furthermore, BSP is not obliged to compensate/indemnify the consultant for any expenses or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bid nor does it guarantee that an award of contract will be made.

(Sgd.) JUAN DE ZUÑIGA, JR.
Chairman

(PDI–March 23, 2006)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

In addition to the list earlier published on 14 October 2005 involving cancelled agencies, the following companies do not have valid licenses to recruit landbased and seabased workers for overseas employment as of 28 February 2006:

CANCELLED AGENCIES (Agencies whose licenses were cancelled for committing recruitment violations)

1. AIRA INTERNATIONAL AGENCY, INC.
2. BEMIL MANAGEMENT TRADING & MANPOWER SERVICES INC.
3. EXODUS HR IMMIGRATION AND PLACEMENT OFFICE
4. JUSERR INTERNATIONAL MANPOWER SERVICES
5. KAIZEN ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANPOWER SERVICES, INC.
6. MANILA MANPOWER SERVICES CORPORATION
7. SOLIMAR PLACEMENT CORPORATION
8. WORLD NET INTERNATIONAL MANPOWER CO. LTD.
9. YCL INTERNATIONAL MANPOWER SERVICES

DELISTED AGENCIES (Agencies that failed to secure the renewal of their license)

1. AUSPHIL SHIP MANAGEMENT, INC.
2. CAREER BUILDER INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION
3. CALM SEA SHIPPING SERVICES, INC.
4. CELMINA SHIPPING AGENCY INC.
5. DOVER PLACEMENT AND SERVICES CORPORATION
6. EFFICIENT INTERNATIONAL MANPOWER SERVICES INC.
7. GARNET OVERSEAS MANPOWER SYSTEMS, INC.
8. GOLDEN ANCHOR SHIPPING MANAGEMENT SERVICES, INC.
9. HOLLYWOOD STAFFING, INC.
10. M.R. INTERNATIONAL TALENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE
11. SAFEWAY MARITIME BULKERS, INC.
12. SECURE HORIZON LTD., INC.
13. SJR DANCE STUDIO & PROMOTION INTERNATIONAL, INC.
14. SOUTHEASTERN SHIPPING
15. SPBA INTL. SERVICES & MANAGEMENT INC.

The public is encouraged to report to the POEA any recruitment activity conducted by the above-named entities.

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Negros land reform beneficiaries still barred from Cuenca land

By Blanche S. Rivera

FARMERS WHO were awarded a portion of the estate of Roberto Cuenca, the son of a former Marcos crony, under the government's land reform program still could not occupy their lands, the Task Force Mapalad said yesterday.

The installation of the 102 farmer beneficiaries of the Hacienda Velez-Malaga in Negros Occidental was postponed anew after the Registry of Deeds failed to restore the certificate of land ownership (CLOA) to them three months after a court ordered the restoration of the titles to the farmers.

Farmer leader Gerry Cahilig said the beneficiaries were also getting exasperated by the Department of Agrarian Reform's inability to implement the court order.

The DAR had scheduled two installations of the Malaga farmers in December last year and in January, but both were cancelled.

The first one was aborted because armed guards allegedly hired by Cuenca blocked DAR representatives and farmers from entering the 478-ha hacienda, of which 114 hectares have been awarded to farmers.

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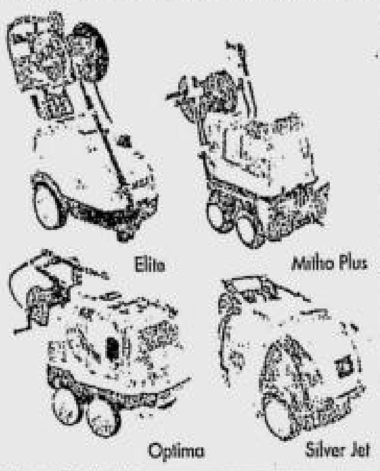

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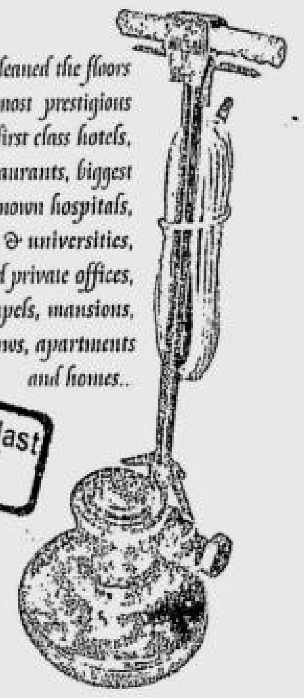
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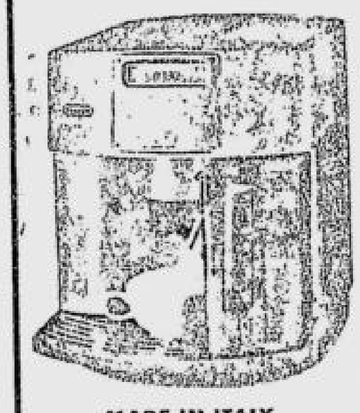
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Basque separatists declare permanent ceasefire

VITORIA, SPAIN—THE BASQUE separatist group ETA on Wednesday announced a permanent ceasefire, bringing a dramatic end to a decades-long campaign of violence and closing the door on one of Western Europe's last active armed separatist movements.

In a video statement, ETA said it "has decided to declare a permanent ceasefire on Friday, March 24, 2006."

"The aim of (the ceasefire) is to promote a democratic process in the Basque country and to build a new framework in which our rights as a people will be recognized," the group said.

Cautious

"ETA also calls on the Spanish and French authorities to respond positively to this new situation, leaving their repressive ways behind," the statement continued.

Deputy Prime Minister Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega said the announcement was "good news for Spaniards," but added that "the government must be more cautious than ever."

"It is our desire and our will that this should be the beginning of the end," she said at the Senate.

Ordinary Spaniards rejoiced at the news.

"I can't believe it!" said Carmen Marichalar, 53, a Madrid tourism office official. "I think it's brilliant. Now they can negotiate and bring an end to this terrorism which has gone on for so long in Spain."

Sandra Dorada, a 29-year-old postal worker, was equally jubilant:

"It's amazing! I hope to God it's true," she said. "But they (ETA) have said this before and it wasn't true."

ETA has announced a number of ceasefires in the past, though never before said they were permanently renouncing violence.

The ETA video showed three people seated at a table in front of an ETA flag, with their faces covered by droopy beige masks and all wearing Basque berets. The video was played on national television and distributed to local Basque television and newspaper outlets.

Speculation about an end to ETA's armed campaign has been building for months, despite a recent wave of small-scale bombings against Basque businesses.

About a dozen small bombs have gone off, most in the Basque region, in the last three weeks. The targets are businesses, banks and institutional offices. ETA has helped finance its struggle with a campaign of extortion targeting the business community.

More home rule

Some have said the recent wave of explosions was an attempt to pad their war chests before a ceasefire made it too late.

Last month, Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said he was optimistic ETA would soon declare a truce.

Zapatero has been an outspoken proponent of granting more home rule to Spain's 17 regions, including the Basque country and the northeastern economic powerhouse Catalonia. The issue has stirred great debate in Spain, with many on the right warning that the country could fall apart.

The prime minister has offered to hold talks with Basque separatist leaders once ETA agreed to lay down its arms, and Spain's parliament has backed the move.

In the late 1980s, the group observed a truce while holding peace talks with the Spanish government in Algeria.

And in September 1998 it declared what it called an open-ended ceasefire that ultimately lasted 14 months. A single round of peace talks during that truce failed to yield an agreement to end the conflict, and ETA resumed attacks in January 2000.

ETA has not staged a fatal attack since May 2003, when a car bomb killed two policemen in the northern town of Sanguesa.

Warning before explosion

In recent years, ETA has invariably phoned in warnings before explosions, and has even marked bombs with the words "Danger, bomb."

Many Spaniards believed that after the March 11, 2004 terror attacks in Madrid carried out by Islamic extremists, ETA had effectively been stymied. The idea is that popular revulsion over terrorism made deadly violence politically unthinkable for the group.

Spain's Socialist government offered ETA negotiations last May if it renounced violence, but the group has kept up a campaign of relatively low violence and in a recent statement ETA made no mention of laying down arms.

The group has claimed responsibility for more than 800 deaths since the late 1960s in its campaign to carve out an independent Basque homeland in northern Spain and southwest France. *AP*

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Reconciliation with Erap now in Puno's hands, says Defensor

By Christine O. Avendaño

INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECretary Ronaldo Puno from now on will spearhead the government's efforts to reconcile with deposed President Joseph Estrada, Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said yesterday.

Defensor said he had earlier been tasked by President Macapagal-Arroyo to oversee reconciliation talks with Estrada's camp, but, repeating a mixed metaphor the President once used in describing her detractors, he said he has grown weary of "chasing the bully in the school yard."

He said that he told Ms Arroyo recently of his decision to hand over the task to Puno and she agreed to it.

"Ma'am, it's so hard to negotiate... you get exhausted when you do so much effort to reconcile and no one wants it anyway," Defensor recalled telling the President.

Defensor said he had told Estrada as early as last January about his apprehensions over the way the government's reconciliation efforts with his camp were going.

Mutual acceptability

Puno himself said upon joining Ms Arroyo's government late last month that he would work for reconciliation with Estrada, whom he had also served as interior and local government secretary, and had a meeting with the toppled leader in the wake of the Feb. 24 proclamation of a state of national emergency.

Defensor said he had discussed the matter with Puno.

"It's best he (Puno) will handle it and he is handling it as we are talking now," Defensor said. He added, however, he felt reconciliation with Estrada should not be pursued "unless there is mutual acceptability."

Puno himself confirmed yesterday that he had taken on the additional function.

"There is nothing formal about it. I was just asked by Mike Defensor to take a more active role in reconciliation efforts with Erap and I have no problem with it," Puno said. "I've also talked to Erap and told him about this."

Puno said he would be more at ease with the job than the much younger Defensor.

"Erap and I can kid with each other," Puno said.

It was not clear how Estrada's trial on plunder and perjury charges, which is drawing to a conclusion, or charges that he had funded recent destabilization moves against Ms Arroyo would affect the prospects of reconciliation. *With a report from Norman Bordadora*

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BIR duns Caruncho heirs for P204M

By Armand N. Nocum and Cynthia D. Balana

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE FILED tax evasion charges yesterday against five children of former Pasig Mayor Emilio Caruncho and his wife Aurora for non-payment of P204.8 million in taxes on real and other properties inherited from their deceased parents.

Named respondents in the case filed with the Department of Justice were Emilio Caruncho III, Rebecca Caruncho-Bernardo, Ma. Aurora Caruncho-Espiritu, Ma. Victoria and Ma. Emilia Caruncho.

BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag said in a press statement that the properties left behind by Emilio and Aurora Caruncho, who died on Oct. 28, 1997 and Dec. 6, 1999, respectively, had been assessed a total of P204,827,007 in estate taxes, capital gains tax and documentary stamp tax, inclusive of increments.

He said letters of authority had been issued against the estates of the Caruncho couple to verify if the taxes had been paid.

"Despite proper service of the notice, none of the heirs has contacted the BIR to discuss the findings, much less submit any document to refute the same," Buñag said, adding that Emilio and Aurora Caruncho left real and personal properties with net taxable value P112,992,753 and P154,113,156, respectively.

According to Buñag, the heirs did not even file the necessary death notices and further investigation showed that the corresponding taxes were not paid either.

"As mandated by law, transfer of all properties, real or personal, tangible and intangible, wherever situated, of a decedent who is a resident citizen shall be reported and declared to the BIR by the executor, administrator or any of the legal heirs as the case may be and the corresponding estates taxes due thereon shall be paid," Buñag said.

Operatives of the BIR's Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program established also that the Caruncho heirs had sold four parcels of land belonging to their parents' estates to the Balsancat Homeowners Inc. without notifying the BIR, according to Buñag.

"This conduct is a clear manifestation of the Caruncho children's willful intent to evade the payment of estate taxes," Buñag said.

He said the discovery of the alleged tax evasion was the result of information furnished by someone who knew about the huge estate left by the Caruncho couple.

"There are more undeclared estate properties out there and we are encouraging the public to furnish the BIR the information it needs," he added.

'Kulturfestival' at Eurocampus

A THREE-DAY CULTURAL FESTIval for 200 visiting students from German Schools in the Asia-Pacific region opens today at the European International School (EIS) at the Eurocampus inside the Better Living Subdivision in Parañaque.

The EIS, the common educational framework of the German and French Schools in the Philippines, is hosting the Kulturfestival held every two years in different EIS schools in the region.

The festival allows visiting students, as well as those studying in their host country, an opportunity to discover the local culture, expand their horizons and develop their skills through interaction with local arts and artists.

Workshops on various arts led by Filipino artists have been lined up to showcase Filipino, traditional as well as Filipino pop culture, according to a joint statement from Deutsche Schule Manila (DSM) Headmaster Wolfgang Kollecker and Ecole Française de Manille (EFM) Proviseur Mireille Vincent.

Activities include Filipino cookery, self-defense and arnis, improvisational integrated arts, cultural dance, indigenous music, bamboo craft, claymation, indigenous material installation, journalism, and Pinoy rock.

The highlight of the Kulturfestival is the "grande finale" on Saturday, March 25. The event includes the last workshops session in the morning, a Philippine arts and crafts fair at the sports field in the afternoon and presentations from the workshops in the evening with drinks, merienda and dinner catered by the German Club, La Cabane and the EIS Canteen.

The Eurocampus was formed 10 years ago when Ecole Française de Manille and European IB Section joined Deutsche Schule Manila, the older school in the system.

Indian docs eye jobs in RP but are barred

ABOUT 500 INDIAN DOCTORS have applied to work in the Philippines to ease a chronic shortage but cannot be given jobs because the Constitution forbids it, the health secretary Francisco Duque said yesterday.

Duque said the Indian doctors were awaiting the government's approval to start work but a provision in the Constitution bars foreign doctors from working in government hospitals.

"I have 500 applicants from India but I cannot hire them because our Constitution doesn't allow that," he said in a speech to a medical group.

He said the Indian doctors could otherwise have filled the vacant posts at various government hospitals due to the large number of Filipino medical professionals who seek work abroad.

Asked how the Indian doctors could be accommodated, Duque said: "We really do not know." He called for a review of the constitutional provision.

The Philippine Medical Association warned last year that the country's health system risked complete collapse in a few years due to the large numbers of Filipino nurses and doctors who have found better-paying jobs abroad.

The Constitution strictly limits the areas where foreigners can find jobs. Foreign doctors are allowed to work here only in very exceptional cases. *AFP*

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OPINION

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Cheap stunt

EDITORIAL

MAYOR EDWARD HAGEDORN APPEARS TO HAVE sprung a surprise on everyone by taking under his wing Michelangelo Zuce, one of the principal witnesses against President Macapagal-Arroyo. The Puerto Princesa mayor, whom the President personally picked to lead the campaign against *jueteng*, called a press conference Monday to announce the revival of the Small Town Lottery and to introduce Zuce as a member of the team that will monitor the implementation of the newest game in town. Zuce would no longer be testifying in any Senate inquiry into alleged election fraud, Hagedorn proudly declared. "He has left his so-called friends in the opposition ... He feared he might commit perjury."

Instead of welcoming the news, Malacañang tried to distance itself from Hagedorn's cheap stunt. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said it was the first time he had heard about it. The President's chief of staff, Michael Defensor, said he had just heard about Zuce's turnaround and carefully noted that it was Hagedorn who had arranged the whole thing. At least, some Palace officials seem to have kept their political instincts in fine form.

Unlike some administration congressmen who rushed to hail Zuce's defection as a setback for the opposition. Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentevella, for instance, was quoted as saying that even if Zuce would not recant, "his testimony can no longer stand before the President." Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan declared that Zuce had "dealt a big blow to the opposition." How is that so?

Zuce created a big splash in August last year, when he told the Senate that as a member of the staff of the President's political adviser, he had either arranged or attended several meetings between administration officials and election officials. He said he had also served as a bagman for the President's campaign and handed out money to some election officials in Mindanao. And most damaging of all, he claimed to have brought several regional directors of the Commission on Elections to a meeting with the President at her own house in La Vista, Quezon City, after which envelopes containing P30,000 each were handed out to the poll officials.

Palace officials immediately branded Zuce's story as "incredible" and "implausible" and just another chapter in the "never-ending witch-hunt" launched by the opposition to bring down the Arroyo administration. Ms Arroyo herself denounced it as "black propaganda" and said the testimony of Zuce and other opposition witnesses were "so easy to sell."

But if Zuce peddled a pack of lies at the Senate, why is the administration buying him now? To put it charitably, if his testimony was so worthless, why are some administration lawmakers rejoicing over his defection and hailing it as a setback to the opposition? Or to put it more bluntly, why did Hagedorn, the President's handpicked anti-gambling czar, buy him off with a key position in what promises to be a lucrative agency? And was Hagedorn really acting on his own?

Zuce's flip-flop undoubtedly damages his credibility. To some people, it only proves Ms Arroyo's claim that his testimony is for sale. But between the Zuce who volunteered his testimony and the Zuce who turned around and is being amply rewarded by the administration, guess who the Filipino public will believe.

It's sad to see how material needs can force a person to make an about-face at the cost of his reputation. But sadder still is to see administration officials giving away government positions (and who knows what else) to block the search for truth and obstruct the course of justice.

Paying for one's meal

FOREIGN COMMENT

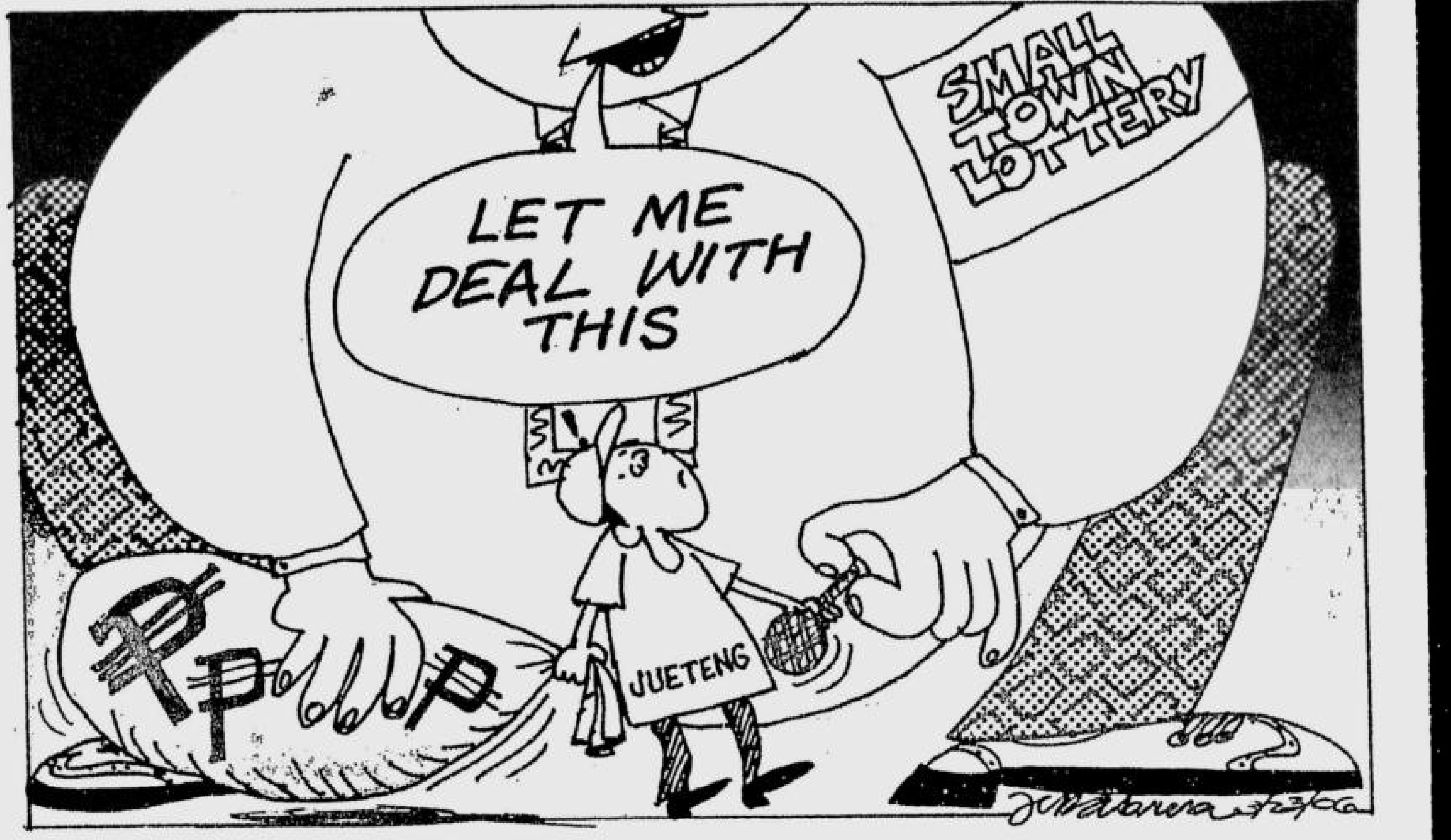
THE SENATE PROPOSAL BARRING LEGISLATORS FROM TAKing gifts from lobbyists initially made an exception of meals. That changed on a bipartisan amendment that correctly added meals to the proscribed list.

Sen. Trent Lott, described the change as "totally ludicrous," adding, "I'll be eating with my wife and so will a lot more senators after we pass this one."

Dining within the family circle can only strengthen those family values that our lawmakers so frequently praise and recommend to the nation. Having to forgo some of the fabulous dining opportunities provided by lobbyists would bring our lawmakers a little closer to life as their constituents know it. ...

... Tougher ethics rules are required to restrict the unseemly relationship between lobbyists and some members of Congress. As lobbyists are put at arm's length, the ethical climate of Congress can only improve.

The Post and Courier (Charleston, South Carolina)



Buzz word

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"INSTIGATE" SEEMS TO BE THE WORD OF THE SEASON.

Stop "instigating" soldiers to stage yet another coup, former President Fidel Ramos warned. Only one percent of the people support a junta installing itself, says the latest Pulse Asia survey.

In a rollicking, barbed column on the Fort Bonifacio standoff coverage, Sun Star's Pablo John Garcia coined the phrase: "instigative journalism."

And Manila cops insist that parading in T-shirts emblazoned with slogans, on Roxas Boulevard, "instigated" upheaval.

"Instigate" comes from the Latin word *instigare*, my dog-eared dictionary says. It means: "to goad or urge forward." Its synonym is: "to incite," as in "inciting to rebellion."

Do media "goad" by blurring lines between facts and comments, asks former United Nations officer Napoleon Vergara. "I've no problems with unpleasant news, as long as they're true and reported without garnishes," Vergara writes. "But what gets my goat is when radio or TV news reports dish out exaggeration and biased side comments. This is editorializing. Or is it instigation?"

Vergara proceeds: "'The group of (UP professor) Randy David is about 5,000-strong and occupies the Edsa southbound lane as it marches towards ....' That's straight reporting. Viewing the same event, another guy on another station was yelling: 'This is the largest demonstration I've ever seen in my life. It dwarfs even the crowds I saw in Edsa I. It could be the end of GMA.'

"Press freedom should not be abridged. But I wish media would be more factual and responsible in their coverage. When scandals broke out during the Reagan era, media went into a 'shark-like feeding frenzy.' And when media became arrogant, citizens asked them: 'Who elected you?'"

In a tongue-in-cheek column, Capitol consultant Garcia suggested that the Senate should probe the claim that a Palace official tried to stop ABS-CBN from covering the Fort Bonifacio non-event. "The coverage was hilarious."

ANC's Ricky Carandang was "dodging one particular question as if it were the bullet that ANC waited to be, but never was, fired .... 'Can you give us an estimate of the crowd over there Ricky?' Three times Ricky was asked the same question. And three times he ducked.

"'It's too dark out here, Twink...'" Ricky mumbled. Nothing before ever stopped him from seeing everything else, then he did an extended commentary on the 'imperiled state of the nation.' Now, he was 'suddenly stricken with an inordinate fear of crowd estimates.'"

Garcia went on: Like the Palace official, "I wanted to call ANC, to thank them for the great time I'd been having .... To save Ricky from this unknown phobia. I wanted to tell ANC: 'There's a crowd of maybe 20. Give or take Ricky Carandang.'

"You could almost feel the collective disappointment of (the) ANC anchors when both factions declared the matter 'resolved.' They kept asking: 'Is it really over?' I wanted to tell them: 'Well, the other network had switched to Allan K and Jaya, if that's any indication.'"

But Ricky would not give up: "Earlier, Senator Biazon said 'I'm not leaving until it's over.' A pause. 'And Senator Biazon is still here.'

"'Does that mean it's not over yet, Ricky? Where is Senator Biazon?'

"'He's walking to his car.'

"For the anchors, the fate of the country hung on whether Senator Biazon's driver would click the ignition or not. 'He's inside his car now.'

"'Does that mean it's over, Ricky?'

"'I don't know about that, Twink,' Ricky replies. 'He's just sitting in his car.'

"You could feel the ANC anchors in deep denial. I could almost hear Karmina Constantino asking: 'So, Ricky, how do you think this non-siege at Fort Bonifacio, which might well be a major non-withdrawal of support, in the aftermath of the non-coup this country just witnessed, where millions of Filipinos collectively avoided Edsa, in a non-expression of national outrage, will affect the nation's stability?'

"And Ricky replies: 'Senator Biazon is just sitting in his car.'"

A businessman, Dr. Peter J. Walker publishes "Insight Philippines." He writes: "Philippine media has became more representative of the deepening divisions amongst Filipinos rather than factual reporters of news. I read the Internet editions of all major Filipino newspapers. None really report any news; they're publishing op-ed articles disguised as news reports."

Luckily, most Filipinos do not care much about politics and politicians on either side. They're too involved in making ends meet. The opposition can sit back. President Macapagal-Arroyo is doing a better job of self-destructing than all her enemies put together.

In Bill Clinton's first presidential campaign, George (Papa) Bush was very popular. Bush ignored economic weaknesses. "Keep the course," he stressed. Clinton's slogan was: "It's the economy, stupid!" Remember who won?

Economic issues unseated more rulers in history than all other causes, put together, did. GMA's economic policies cut into this very hope of Filipinos—especially of overseas Filipino workers—to a better life for themselves and their families.

And the breaking point for a resilient people comes when all the hope is taken away. Sensational headlines will dwindle in their capacity to shape future events as the anger of the people increase.

* * *

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Courage

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I HAD NO TIME TO TALK IN GRADUATIONS this year—my apologies to the couple of schools that invited me—not least because it was my son's own last Sunday. He graduated from high school at La Salle Greenhills. Two things there gave me an idea of what message to give to today's graduates generally, whether from high school, or elementary, or college.

The first was the blackboard in the gym that still carried part of the Namfrel tally in the "snap elections" of 1986, with the names "Marcos," "Aquino," "Tolentino" and "Laurel" on it. That tally was never finished, of course, the Namfrel volunteers who manned it walked out of the gym in protest over massive cheating by Marcos. That blackboard, otherwise an ordinary piece of furniture in an ordinary classroom, has become an extraordinary symbol of courage, a refusal to kiss the hand of tyranny.

That is the one thing I would encourage the graduates of today to have: courage in the face of threat and treachery. Indeed, that is the one thing I would encourage the youth of this country generally to have. Not the least of the reasons for it being that we're back to where we were 20 years ago, fighting dictatorship all over again. That is what this regime has done, brought back to this country martial law in all its viciousness. The killings of leftists and provincial journalists—the body count of the former in particular has been soaring by the day—testify to the rolls of barbed wire being strung out across the nation once again. We do not fight it, we will be in for one long and dark night all over again. We do not find the courage to fight it, we will be like the dead in "Sixth Sense": We will be dead, and not know it.

The killings of the leftists in particular should be the place where we dig our trenches and stand our ground. The tack of fascism is always to strike at the fringes, to raise the mailed fist at those it calculates the public will ignore. I repeat Bertolt Brecht's aphorism about the consequences of ignoring it, based on Brecht's own experience with Nazism: First they came and took my neighbor, and I said nothing because he was a communist. Then they came and took my neighbor, and I said nothing because he was a Jew. Now they've come for me.

Last Thursday, a reporter asked me if I wasn't afraid about doing something like mounting the concert that we had at Sunken Garden. I said, of course, I am, I have mouths to feed, too. But that is what courage is, overcoming fear to do what you have to do. The way I saw it, I said, it was just a choice between two things. I could be arrested and brought to prison where at least I could be free in mind even if I were not free in body. Where at least I could have the satisfaction of knowing my integrity and dignity and freedom are intact even as my body is shackled and subjected to various indignities. Or I could live in the bigger prison outside whose watchtowers grow taller and whose searchlights become more blinding each day that I am silent, where I can be free only in body but not in mind. Where I can be miserable in the knowledge that I am bequeathing a world to my kids where there is no air and sunlight and nourishment, spiritually if not physically.

The choice is a no-brainer.

The second thing in my son's graduation that triggered an idea in my head was a phrase the valedictorian said in his speech, which was, "standing before you today are the future leaders of this country."

I had heard that phrase countless times before in the many graduations I have spoken in, and indeed in my own high school graduation ages ago. (I did not graduate from college for reasons I will not dwell on here.) Truly, these will be the leaders of tomorrow, but what kind of leaders? I recalled how during my own high school graduation, we were filled only with the most wondrous dreams of what we were going to do for the glory of God and country. The same was true of college. Yet I see many of my former friends now, and they radiate only the aura of bedraggled lives, bristling only with cynicism and scorn. At least those of them who have not yet left the country, though I don't know that the ones who sought greener pasture elsewhere really found it. Worse, some of the most idealistic and self-sacrificing people I met then, who risked life and limb to fight a dictatorship, are now busy devoting time and flab to mount one.

I wondered how the graduates of today would be 20 years from now. Which made me think: We always talk of how the youth of today, particularly the most promising of them as seen in graduations, will one day make their mark on society. We never talk about how society will one day make its mark on the youth of today, especially the most promising of them. Easy to think when you are young how you are going to change the world. Not so easy to see how the world is going to change you.

There is one other thing I would encourage the graduates of today to develop, and that is courage of another kind. More than physical courage, it is moral courage. It is a higher level of courage to aspire for, it is a harder kind of courage to attain. Hard as it is not to flinch in the face of a threat, even harder not to flinch in the face of a blandishment. What kills the best and brightest in this country is not fear, it is greed. Hard as it is not to slink away before the march of boot and glint of bayonet, even harder not to slink away when all your friends and relatives are telling you you're a fool not to go along with the tide. What kills the best and brightest in this country are not moments of bravado, it is moments of silence.

Hard as it is to find the wit to graduate with honors, even harder to find the will to live honorably.

OFWs could lose market edge in Italy

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE SENATORS HAVE PASSED A RESOLUTION expressing their opposition to the idea of the House of Representatives unilaterally convening a constituent assembly to consider Charter change. It's both sad and tragic that the reasons they gave, as I heard Sen. Richard Gordon say over TV, are personality-centered and not issue-oriented. He said the shift would only help politicians who cannot win nationally or who lost in the presidential elections, unmistakably referring to Speaker Jose de Venecia, who's widely believed to be eyeing the post of prime minister. But take De Venecia out of the picture and the shift to a parliamentary/unicameral system is still very much valid. It's what we badly need at this stage of our economic (under)development.

* * *

South Korea abandoned its one-year experiment with a bicameral set-up after it realized that such a system was too slow and laborious for passing the laws it needed to become a tiger economy. If we are to catch up with the emerging tigers in our Southeast Asian region, we need to pass many laws to modernize our economy and discard obsolete structures. But our two-chamber legislature is not only too expensive, it's also too slow and in perpetual gridlock, especially with the kind of senators we have. The major reason for their resistance is their fear of being jobless. But there are bigger stakes involved and they are being summoned to exhibit a new brand of selfless patriotism. Besides, most of them can run for seats in a new parliament in their home provinces.

* * *

At the reception hosted by the four "Francophone" countries (France, Canada, Belgium and Switzerland) for International Francophone Day 2006, Bukidnon Rep. Miguel Zubiri said I should add to the list of crucial economic bills now sleeping in the Senate the bill of which he is the principal author: HB 4629 or the Biofuels Act of 2005. To emphasize its importance, said Zubiri, it was co-authored by 100 other House members and unanimously passed in November 2005, right after the All Saints' Day recess. The Biofuels Act seeks to jumpstart a biofuel program aimed at replacing within four years one-tenth of our national gasoline consumption "with a VAT-free, cheap, clean gas" produced from sugarcane and coconut. Zubiri said it would give jobs to 300,000 new farmworkers and create a new job market for an estimated 10,000 ethanol plant employees across the country as well as millions of coconut farmers. Ethanol, derived from sugarcane and other agricultural crops, and coco-methyl ester, which comes from coconut oil, can be blended with gasoline and diesel. Substituting 10 percent of imported oil with locally produced biofuels, stressed Zubiri, would result in annual foreign exchange savings of P32 billion.

* * *

In the Senate, the counterpart bill is authored by six senators. Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla has appealed for the speedy enactment of a law on alternative and renewable sources of energy. But up to now, the Senate has not acted on what should now be the "Biofuels Act of 2006," as it has been tied up by investigations.

Happily, though, while the nation awaits urgent Senate action on this crucial legislation, there are other positive developments in the energy front. The price of LPG, for instance, has been rolled back four times in less than a month, for a total reduction of P3.36 per kilo, so that the 11-kilo LPG now costs between P483 and P493.

* * *

Cecile Alvarez and I featured our ambassador to Italy, Philippe Lhuillier, in our dzRH program last Sunday night and he talked about our Filipino workers in Italy, one of our major labor markets. He said Pinoy workers there are "generally happy," and one reason is that Italy is recognized as one of the most "labor-friendly" countries in the world. Salaries are higher there than in many other destinations: if an OFW works for 56 hours a week, he can earn between 430 and 770 euros weekly (one euro is about P62.25). Italian laws also offer our workers the opportunity to bring their families, and children receive many social benefits such as education and health care.

* * *

Lhuillier noted that Pinoy workers are preferred over other nationalities in Italy. Evidence of this is that Italian authorities have increased our direct-hire quota to 3,000, with 2,000 slots for care-givers and 1,000 for managerial, both skilled and unskilled. But he also noted that while Pinoy workers are paid higher wages, other workers such as those from Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Eastern Europe are willing to take smaller pay. Thus, while a Filipino may get 1,200 euros monthly, others settle for 300 to 400 euros. The solution, as Lhuillier sees it, is to upgrade Pinoy skills so they will have more to offer. For instance, instead of just being dishwashers, Pinoys could be given some training in bar-tendering. He said our embassy in Rome conducts regular seminars on entrepreneurship to help Pinoys get better pay. But I hope the Department of Labor and Employment will lose no time in conducting higher skills training, so that OFWs will retain their high marketability.

Lhuillier also noted that while Filipino nurses are in great demand abroad, they cannot work in Italy where the government requires 4,500 hours of schooling. RP nurses log only 4,000 hours. He's now negotiating with the Italian government on this issue as well as on the automatic conversion of RP driver's licenses in Italy. Without this, Pinoy workers have to spend a lot to go to driving school and they will have to take the exam in Italian, which is very difficult to learn.

* * *

Correction: The symposium on Charter change, featuring six women members of the Constitutional Commission, under the auspices of the Phi Kappa Phi honor society, will be held today (not last Tuesday) at the Alumni Hostel, Benitez Hall of UP Diliman, from 9 to 11:30 a.m.

Rest for the Visayan Sea

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

WHILE POLITICIANS ARE TALKING ABOUT restiveness, restlessness and unrest in the political front, those concerned about the environment are talking rest.

A group that calls itself the Visayan Sea Squadron is asking the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to give the Visayan Sea a rest by declaring a "closed season" in that body of water.

Mayors, too, have asked the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to declare the entire area closed to commercial fishing vessels (three tons and above); and the DENR to work for the declaration of the Visayan Sea as a Unesco World Heritage Site for marine biodiveristy.

According to the Visayan Sea Squadron, an outreach program of the Law of Nature Foundation, the Visayan Sea has an area of about 1 million hectares. It is "at the apex of the fabled Visayan Marine Triangle which lies at the very heart of the Sulu-Sulawesi Eco-region."

The way this triangle is being described makes one imagine a fantastic water wonderland that exists only in tales of yore. But no, this region is still alive, even if now threatened by depletion and destruction.

The Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Triangle, which covers a wide swath from the Philippines to Indonesia, is supposed to be the richest marine ecoregion in the world and is home to the largest variety of marine life—fishes, coral, sea grasses, etc., in the whole world.

In the bosom of the Sulu-Sulawesi Triangle is the Visayan Marine Triangle found in Central Philippines. It is "the center of the center, the beating heart of marine biodiversity on Earth. At the apex (of this Visayan triangle) is the Visayan Sea, once so rich and seemingly limitless in marine life abundance it was described as the Alaska of the Philippines. If carefully managed, the Visayan Sea alone can feed the entire Filipino people the whole year round."

There are 12 eco-regions within this Sulu-Sulawesi area. Two are in Indonesia and one is in Malaysia; but according to environment lawyer Tony Oposa, God blessed the Philippines with the remaining nine of the richest marine waters in the world. A scientific finding, he said, identified the Philippine Sea as the "epicenter" of marine biodiversity on Earth.

According to Oposa, the Philippine Sea is home to the greatest number and variety of coral reefs and underwater forests. Of the 700 or so coral species found in the whole world, 500 are in the Philippines. A single coral garden dive site in Anilao, Batangas and a single marine sanctuary in Bantayan Island in Cebu, with a combined area of 10 hectares, have more variety of corals than what can be found in the entire Caribbean put together.

Massive, unregulated, destructive fishing activities have degraded the ecological richness of the Visayan Sea. Some species of fish are supposedly facing extinction.

And so the plea from the NGOs and local officials mainly from Iloilo, Negros and Cebu. Those who signed the petition and resolution pledged to participate and cooperate with one another in self-assessment for environmental compliance audit, total eradication of illegal and destructive fishing, as well as in identifying main areas of interest. They also asked that a Philippine Navy gunboat be permanently assigned in the triangle.

The letter of the Visayan Sea Squadron legal enforcement team, which is headed by Gloria Estenzo Ramos, to the DENR and the Department of Agriculture said that because of the Visayan Sea's degraded condition, it should be made to "rest" and "recuperate" from intensive fishing activities, especially by vessels weighing more than three gross tons (as cited in the Fisheries Code or Republic Act 8550).

The plea is based on the legal provision which states that "The Secretary may declare a closed season in any Philippine waters (lying) outside the boundary of municipal waters for conservation and ecological purposes."

During this closed season, these government agencies should determine the maximum sustainable yield of the Visayan Sea and determine areas available for certain types of fishing. Fishing permits should then be issued based on area and on maximum sustainable yield pursuant to the Fisheries Code.

The Code clearly states that "The Department of Agriculture shall issue such number of licenses and permits for fishery activities subject to the limits of the maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Preference shall be given to resource users in the local communities adjacent or nearest to the municipal waters."

This provision, Oposa said, seems to have languished in the sickbed of non-compliance, and it is time to tickle it into action.

From March 19 to June 24 this year, the Visayan Sea Squadron will do a marine survey of municipal waters. BFAR directors of Regions 5, 6 and 7 are reportedly cooperating.

Here on dry land, we await with eagerness the Earth Day celebration that has the participation of our newly named cardinal, Gaudencio Rosales, archbishop of Manila. Rosales has distanced himself from the political arena into which a number of his fellow bishops have been drawn. This "greenie" red hat, who is not exactly a greenhorn, would rather concentrate on resurrecting the earth than be drawn into politics.

Earth Day is on April 22, the Saturday after Easter. The theme "Mea Culpa: A Call for Repentance and Atonement" sounds Lenten to me, but Odette Alcantara of Mother Earth-Philippines explained that it leads to hope and resurrection. What better venue for the celebration than Smokey Mountain, a garbage dump no more.

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Reconciliation

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

YESTERDAY, THE SMALL TOWN MAYOR WHO became president, Joseph Estrada, finally appeared in court to defend himself. The day was also the birth anniversary of that other small town mayor who became president, Emilio Aguinaldo. These two men, both flawed and controversial individuals, managed to inspire hatred among their enemies as much as they managed to inspire undying loyalty among their followers, But Aguinaldo showed he could reconcile with his enemies.

Manuel L. Quezon served on Aguinaldo's staff. But he got bored with shuffling papers and requested an assignment to the front. He served under Gen. Tomas Mascardo in Bataan, until he was ordered to surrender to find out, among others, if it was true that Aguinaldo had been captured by the Americans. It turned out to be true.

Anyway, after the cessation of hostilities, Aguinaldo retired from public life. As Quezon's career progressed, his former commander occupied himself with his lands and the organization he so cherished, the League of the Veterans of the Revolution.

But in the 1920s Aguinaldo emerged from retirement and involved himself in partisan politics. The reason? He felt that politicians were unfairly ganging up on Governor General Leonard Wood. Among them was, of course, the chief Wood-hater of them all, Quezon.

Over the next decade Aguinaldo and Quezon would be at each other's throats. You know the famous incidents: how Aguinaldo expelled Quezon from the veterans' association, only to be told by an amused Quezon that he had never belonged to it (a case which, incidentally, should make us think whether or not any group may claim a monopoly when it comes to nursing the memory of a great event); how the Aguinaldistas would display Quezon's alleged Katipunan wife during campaign sorties in Bataan; or how the townspeople of Malolos greeted Aguinaldo by shutting all their windows, and hanging black crepe from their houses, after Quezon raised the issues on Bonifacio's execution and Luna's assassination.

You may have heard of how Quezon made the Philippine Legislature withdraw Aguinaldo's pension, leading to the foreclosure of some of the latter's lands; or how Ms Quezon laid the cornerstone of the Bonifacio Monument in Caloocan; and how Quezon had Bonifacio's neglected bones dug up and enshrined in the Legislative building, allegedly in order to glorify the dead Supremo at the expense of the living Heneral. The stories attesting to the bitter Aguinaldo-Quezon enmity are legion. But in 1941, the two buried the hatchet.

Years ago, I saw on television Larry Henares' account on how he witnessed the reconciliation of the two, thanks to the intercession of his grandfather, Daniel Maramba. According to Maramba's biography, on July 14, 1940, he wrote to Quezon inviting him to a luncheon gathering for his 70th birthday. The invitation was accepted the next day. Maramba then wrote to Aguinaldo inviting him to the same luncheon. Two days later, he got a letter of acceptance from Aguinaldo. Maramba then invited to the luncheon some of the leading officials of the government at that time: Speaker Jose Yulo, Defense Secretary Teofilo Sison and Resident Commissioner Quintin Paredes.

A book describes what happened on the day itself:

"The day arrived. The first to come was President Quezon, accompanied by Colonel Nieto, followed shortly by Speaker Yulo, General Aguinaldo, Resident Commissioner Paredes and Secretary Sison. President Quezon and General Aguinaldo who had become bitter enemies since the Wood controversy of 1923, tried to sound cordial towards each other but were quite stiff for a while. Later, they got into animated conversation about many topics but they carefully avoided politics.

"After lunch Quezon said, 'Maramba, you have not yet told me what you want for your birthday.'

"'I still have one ambition I would like fulfilled today.'

"'What is that?'

"'To see you and Don Emilio work together again for the good of the country. It grieves me to see two Filipino patriots at loggerheads. I know that your differences are all due to a misunderstanding.'

"General Aguinaldo aired his complaints. President Quezon likewise gave his side. In the end, the two agreed it was all a misunderstanding. They embraced each other and parted that afternoon as friends."

On June 12, 1941, Aguinaldo proudly marched with his veterans at the Luneta in the first government-sponsored observance of that date. June 12 was our flag day, as mandated in an executive order issued by Quezon that same year, and it remained so until it was declared our Independence Day by the Macapagal administration.

Now this is what is important about the relationship of Quezon and Aguinaldo. Their bitterness and sometimes ruthless attacks on each other—and their manipulation of the symbols and issues of the Philippine Revolution—may have been unfortunate, but they are understandable. They were not just opponents, after all, but political opponents. As far as Quezon was concerned, the General, by deciding to join the fray, made himself fair game. And as far as Aguinaldo was concerned, he would fight fire with fire. The good thing is that they—after causing each other so much grief and pain—eventually made their peace with each other. During the war, when Aguinaldo appealed for an end to the fighting, Quezon—in Corregidor and in exile—refused American appeals to condemn the General.

Reconciliation is possible; but before it is reached, comes the fight; and to end the fight, at least in politics, the public must have shown to whom it has given a mandate—for a mandate is the only thing a politician ever really respects.

Old shoes

YOUNG BLOOD

Rolly Jude M. Ortega

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

AMONG THE MORE THAN 6,000 PAIRS OF SHOES YOU will find in our school, mine must be in the poorest shape. All that is left of its original label are scattered dots. The tongue and side flaps of each shoe are in danger of falling apart anytime, much like the petals of a withered rose. The rubber soles and front covers, which were once white, are now gray with dust and age. With every step I take, my little toes peek out from tiny holes at the sides. (Now girls looking at me as I walk can find out if a guy with small shoes has small . . . toes.)

The size 7 canvas shoes cost me P209 last year. Now, beggars will sneer if I offered them my shoes. Well, they don't have to do that because I don't have any plans of letting go of them yet. In fact, I've decided to wear them until the end of the school year, or until all my toes are exposed, whichever comes first.

I'm amused when other students stare at my battered and tattered footwear. I try to guess what's on their minds. They probably pity me. I sure look poorer than a barefoot rat.

But I couldn't care less. Being poor is currently in fashion. (With the expanded value-added tax and all the corruption in government, we don't have much choice, do we?) What matters to me is that I don't have athlete's foot. Besides, school is not a catwalk.

I'm glad male students are free to wear any kind of pants in my school. Sneakers look just fine with jeans.

For more than a year, I've been wearing the same shoes every day—inside the classroom, out on the streets, even during acquaintance parties. I take them off only when I'm going to sleep or while taking a bath. Their sole competition is the red, oversized slippers my old roommate in the dorm gave me to remember him by.

The shoes are the best investment I have ever made by far. They helped me pass two PE classes—dancing and badminton—but they have to last until I get through basketball this semester. I've worn them for more than 400 days already. This means that I've spent about 50 centavos a day only for my very reliable footwear. (I figure that if our lawmakers adopt this kind of austerity measure for themselves instead of burdening the people with so many much taxes, our economy might recover faster.)

I have no plans of buying a new pair yet because walking inside the mall makes my legs ache. And I hate crowded places. And I hate shopping. And I hate capitalism.

Of course, I'm just making pathetic excuses. I'm actually waiting for the day when I will have enough money to buy better shoes (I'm dreaming of Ferragamo or a pair of Zoom LeBron III). In the meantime, I am thinking of a way to convince Manny Pacquiao how badly I need money so that he would give me some *balato* from his latest win. And I'm still weighing the moral implications of betting in the illegal numbers game called "last two."

I never liked sneakers before. I bought mine only because all my newfound friends last year were wearing sneakers. We agreed to wear shoes of the same kind but of different colors. There were already red, green and blue, and I was supposed to have Power Ranger white. But I had to settle for a black pair with slightly different markings because it was the only one available in the store then.

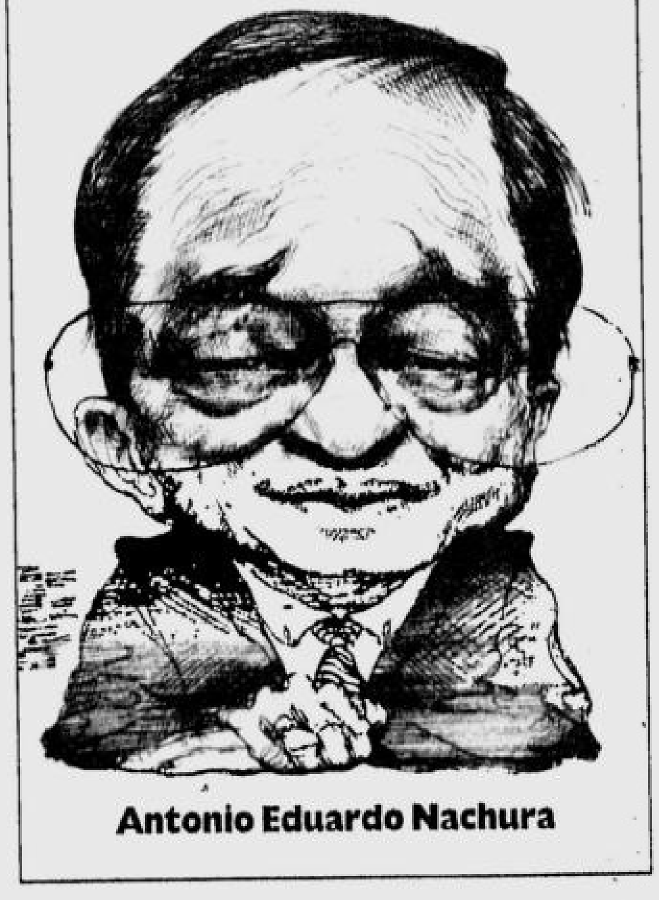
From the moment I started wearing them, I was convinced canvas shoes were the most comfortable shoes in the world. They also made me part of a cool brotherhood like the Fellowship of the Ring. Thus, seven pairs of sneakers would usually walk together to and from Mathematics, Chemistry and Technical Drawing classes. And suddenly, I was not this antisocial paperback junkie anymore, and the number of people calling me "weird" was getting smaller by the week. Before that, a lone pair of black suede shoes trod the school premises by themselves.

The sneakers, however, did not keep our brotherhood together for long. The next semester, the one who always thought up ways for the group to bond together had to transfer school. Another stopped studying. We also had different class schedules and others found the company of others more enjoyable. My sneakers had their chance to take a different path when I finally realized that I was always getting lost trying to find the x's and y's, and decided I might do better if I aspired for public service.

I don't see the other guys very often anymore. But most of us still use the same old shoes. And I'll continue wearing my sneakers, even if they are stained, discolored and torn. I don't want to buy new shoes. I might never find a better or equally valuable pair.

Rolly Jude M. Ortega, 20, is a second year AB Political Science student at Notre Dame of Marbel University in Koronadal City.

IN THE NEWS



Antonio Eduardo Nachura

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The voice of the unheard

I AM WRITING TO THANK SOLITA Monsod for her column "What makes pilots special." (PDI, 3/1/06) It couldn't have been said any better. I am a wife of a pilot who's currently working now for Qatar Airways. Everything that she said in her column is exactly what's happening.

My husband was stationed at Doha, Quatar in April 2005, and my children and I joined him in August 2005. But after almost a year, we decided to go back. We can't raise our children out here the way we want them raised. So, as Monsod said, painful as it is, I'm going to be separated from my husband. But we have no choice: we give more importance to our children's upbringing and education.

Actually, we went ballistic over some reports which said that the salary of PAL pilots ranges from $6,000 to $8,000 monthly. I am really glad that Monsod corrected that very wrong information. She's right though: outside PAL, pilots are receiving $9,000 to $12,000.

It is very true that just given half of it, Filipino pilots will not leave the Philippines. I could go on and on, and point by point. But I would like to cut this short and just thank Monsod for the column.

Monsod truly served as the voice of those who, like us, can't be heard simply because we lack the resources.

—ANETTE DE OCAMPO,
anette_deocampo@yahoo.com

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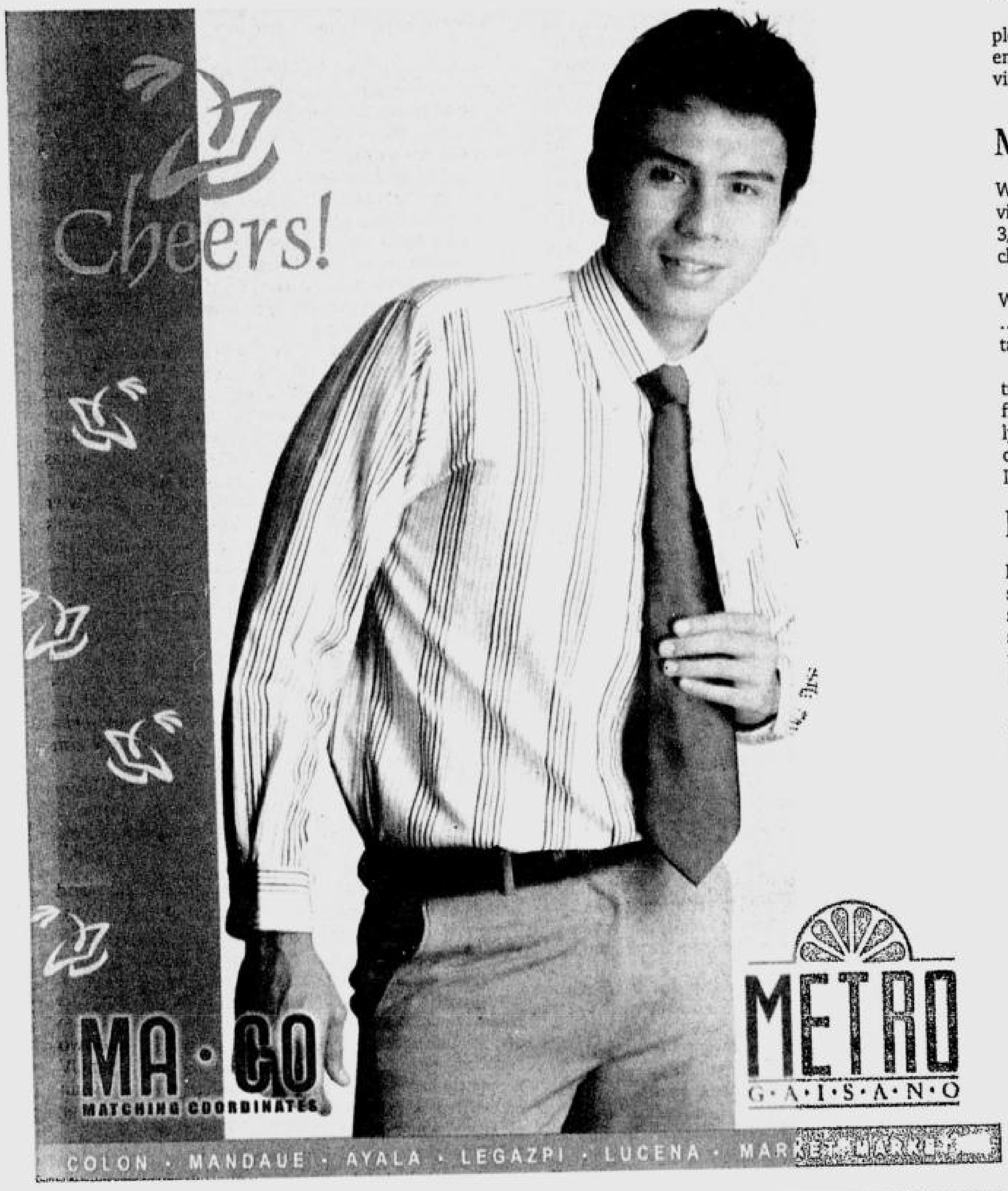
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Gems of goodness, a choice of the heart

I READ THELMA SAN JUAN'S MARCH 10 COLumn. I thank her for putting in print a sentiment I'm sure we share with many mothers out there. Yes, conditions in our country are getting worse; yes, our children's future is getting dimmer; and, yes, it's getting harder and harder for us to convince them to find their niches right here at home.

But there are many of us who still believe that we are blessed with so many gems of goodness and we just have to work harder to discover these gems. As writers, San Juan and I know there's as much good as bad out there; or should I say, more good than bad, except that the bad is so easy to find—it even presents itself to us without much effort on our part! This being so, we just have to work harder to track down the good.

I believe that patriotism is natural in all of us, a part of a person's spirit and goodness. So, no matter how bad the future of one's country may seem to be, patriotism will always be somewhere in a person's spirit—simply because one's country is one's home; so love for country can only be natural and real for all of us.

So I thought, it might be interesting for people to share among themselves their experiences in the way they practice patriotism, this virtue which we think we direly lack.

In the case of my husband and myself, we decided to use Filipino as our family's "official" language. It was very awkward when my children were younger because all their cousins were English-speaking. But now that they're grown-ups, I realize it has become part of their grounding, their sense of home and belongingness.

Now that my children are adults, I know that they see my patriotism in the way I conduct my life and in my commitments, views and values. I don't need to preach patriotism to them or to reprimand them for unpatriotic acts. I live out my patriotism in my own quiet but staunch way, and they know it.

I am very open to their going abroad to enhance their careers and make more money, although I always tell them that no matter where they find themselves in the future, they should make sure to contribute to our country's development. Coming back to the Philippines must always be a priority.

But we've seen this desire to come home in so many of our *kababayans*. To them, there's never been an alternative but to come back home. I have long called it a choice of the heart. Only the heart can make one turn his back on a stable life abroad for (perhaps) a less abundant life here at home.

—MONINA LA Ó,
moninatl@gmail.com

Manage wastes, not waste resources

WE SALUTE YOU FOR THE NEWS STORY "Environment groups to sue Reyes." (PDI, 3/10/06) However, we would like to make a clarification.

The report said that the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA 9003) "mandates … the conversion of controlled dumps to sanitary landfills by 2006."

Nowhere in RA 9003 will one find that controlled dumps should be converted into landfills beginning Feb. 16, 2006. Section 37 merely states that all controlled dumps should be closed five years after the effectivity of the Act. It does not in any manner say that controlled dumps are to be converted to landfills.

What RA 9003 mandates is for us to ecologically manage our wastes. It mandates every local government unit to establish materials recovery facilities (MRFs) for this purpose.

The law tells us to manage our wastes and not to waste valuable resources by throwing them to landfills.

—REY K. PALACIO,
SIningYAPak (SIYAP),
Ecol Waste Coalition-
Task Force Dumpsite,
118 San Pascual,
Obando, Bulacan

Poorly sifting the chaff from the grain

MANUEL L. QUEZON III IS ONE OF THE PRESENT opinion makers I admire since he is able to sift the chaff from the grain. I saw this for myself when he was interviewed on ANC several times. But his column, "She is as they are" (PDI, 3/2/06), betrayed his cool.

In that column, he said those who express support for the President are people who have not given heed to "the better angels of their nature"; so that to refuse the call of the opposition makes them "fiendish" and "demonized by selfish class interest." They are lapdogs like lawyer Romela Bengzon; Palace pooches like apologist Alex Magno; and aloof, even contemptuous of the coarse manners and enthusiasms of the vulgar herd. Wow! How I wish I had the same command of words to express my disgust when people don't agree with me.

I don't work in the Palace; I'm no heavyweight lawyer like Bengzon; I'm not a well-known social scientist like Alex Magno; I'm not to the Manor born; and I don't speak Spanish. But what I am, is. I'm one of the many ordinary Filipino citizens who can be coarse and vulgar as they push and shove when the daily.grind of life gets tough.

Also, I don't agree with the opposition when it puts President Macapagal-Arroyo down since it doesn't offer an acceptable alternative—that is, a transition government that will be composed of personalities I know not much about, and who will definitely fight over the spoils of victory. If we're the basket case of Asia, a transition government like that will just throw us to the garbage dump for scavengers to feast upon.

So, do all Filipinos who take such a side in these divisive times deserve the choice description of Quezon? I remember very well two things:

1. In the game of perception, it depends on whose side you're on. As Maria Ressa said in the MOPC night, a person's terrorist may be another's liberator. Can Filipinos be blamed for playing deaf?

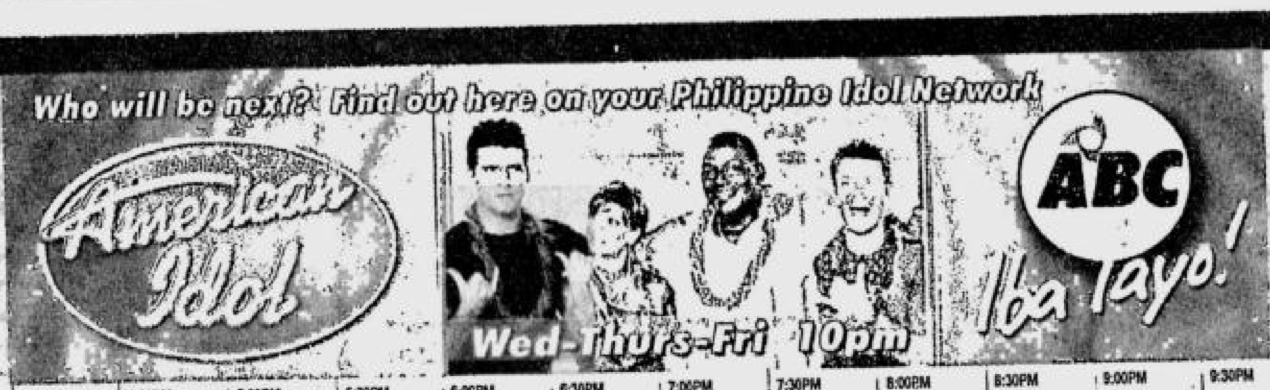
2. A Philippine President once said that he'd rather have a government run like hell by Filipinos, than one run like hell by Americans. To this day—from the time I came across the line many, many years ago—I still wonder as to the wisdom behind those words, especially after seeing so many Filipinos seeking greener pasture in the United States. If we're in hell right now due to the daily dose of political bickering, what's new? Can Filipinos be blamed for being callous?

—GEAN DIOPENES,
geandiopenes@yahoo.com

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Thursday, March 23, 2006


Who will be next? Find out here on your Philippine Idol Network
American Idol
Wed-Thurs-Fri 10pm
ABC
Iba Tayo!

ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM
ABC 5			WNCAA (Rerun)		Barclay's EPL		FA Cup		Sentro	Mumbai Thrillers
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema			Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Outstanding Twins	TV Patrol World	
AXN		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 6)		CSI: Miami (Season 1)		30 Seconds To Fame	Samsung Sports World	Cold Squad		Amazon
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Tom & Jerry Show		Baby Looney Tunes	Codename Kids Next Door	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Power Rangers Wild Force
Cinema One		In This Corner				Gumapang Ka Sa Lusak				Bakit Papa?
Cinemax	Come September (2:45PM)				We're No Angels (4:35 PM)				Triggerman (6:20 PM)	
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International
Crime/Suspense		Crossing Jordan		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Profiler		Forensic Files	North Mission Road	Law & Order
Discovery Channel		Great Quakes		The Greatest Ever		Superstructures		Failure Analysis		Extreme Engineering
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Un-talkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven
ESPN		Pro Billiards '05 BCA Open 9-Ball C'ships Finals		Pro Billiards '03 Int'l Challenge of Champs Finals		X-Games Files '04			Pool Snooker Mosconi Cup 2005	
ETC		For Love Or Money 3		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show
EWTN	The Catholic Faith & Vatican II	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Virtue Storybook	Image Of God	Your Vocation: God's Call In Your Life	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Good Or Evil, Who Decides?	EWTN Gallery	Where God Weeps	EWTN Live (Encore) With Fr. Mitch Pacwa
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	First Love Of A Royale Prince		Dragonball Z	Great Teacher Onizuka	Le Robe de Mariage	24 Oras		Extra Challenge
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched	Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		Wedding Daze (3:50 PM)			Ladies Man	Bewitched	The Nanny	Strong Medicine
HBO		Body Double (3:15 PM)				If Lucy Fell			The Corp (6:45 PM)	
Hero TV	Yaktatel Japan	Mr Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Beyblade V Force	Crush Gear Nitro	Shadow Of The Elves	Mission Odyssey	Rune Soldier	Naruto
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman		Smackdown				JLU	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Mad TV
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fed	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Motto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate
MTV Philippines	VH1 Do It Like A Superstar: Dating	MTV Cribs	MTV Hits		Pimp My Ride	Pop Inc		2006 MAA Nominee Specials	MTV Hits	
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX News		Star MYX	OPM MYX
National Geographic	Africa From The Ground Up	Megastructures		Storm Stories		Frontiers of Construction		Top 6		Wow!
NBN		Teledyaryo Alas-Tres		Teledyaryo Sports Atbp.	Dyna Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Teledyaryo		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)		
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo
PBO			[illegible] Bang Sambahan Ka		Masikip, Madilim Ang Kahapon				Hotshots	
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zentrix	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Love At Aegean Sea	Irene
RPN 9	TV Shopping					Global Window		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The 4400
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping		SBN Music Video
Solar Sports		Danish Open 2006		WTA Tokyo Finals		Phil. Mtn Bike Pro Tour	NBA Game Warriors @ Spurs			Sagupaan
Sports Plus	NBA Game Houston @ Dallas					World Poker Tour 2				Gillette World Cup Preview 4
Star Movies	The Age Of Innocence					Miracle (5:05 PM)				
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Angel		American Idol		Star News Asia
Studio 23				PBL Game 2				Spirits	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup

Channel	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	S.O.S		Wala Yan Sa Lolo Ko		Big News	All Results Show	Dokyu		Billboard On-Air
ABS-CBN 2	Gulong Ng Palad	Sa Piling Mo	Princess Lulu	Pinoy Big Brother		Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
AXN		Fear Factor (Season V)		Fear Factor (Season V)		Sports Disaster V		The Contender Best of Fight Scenes Special	
Cartoon Network	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Energy Bomb	Powerpuff Girls		Mucha Lucha	Duck Dodgers	Justice League	Samurai Jack
Cinema One				Acacia				Kay Tagal Kang Hinintay	
Cinemax		Delusion			The Assassin (9:35 PM)				The Opposite Sex And How To Live With Them
CNN		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Crime/Suspense		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		What Should You Do?		The Closer		Prison Break	
Discovery Channel		The Road to Le Mans		Mythbusters		The Greatest Ever		Power Zone	
Disney Channel	Wonderful World Of Disney			Lizzie Mcguire		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN	Sportscenter Asia	Pool Snooker Mosconi Cup 2005		In The Driver's Seat	LPGA Golf Safeway Int'l Presented by Coca-Cola 4th rd				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Will & Grace 4	Insider Weekend/ Rated On	Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN		Catechisms And Controversies	The Word Was Made Flesh	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	The Journey Home Encore	
Fox News						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Encantadia	My Name Is Kim Sam Soon		Jewel In The Palace		Magpakailanman			Salsa!
Hallmark Channel		Judging Amy		Mystery Woman: Sing Me A Murder			Judging Amy (10:35PM)		Strong Medicine (11:25PM)
HBO				Ray					Top Gun
Hero TV	Mirmo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh	Yaktatel Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Mission Odyssey	Rune Soldier
IBC 13		ME TV		PTA Best Of The Philippines		Global Family Series	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV		That 70s Show	Everybody Hate Chris	The Late Show David Letterman		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Comedy Central Presents	South Park	The Man Show
Lifestyle Network	E! News Weekend		It's Good To Be	Life & Style		Your Private Island	Genuine Article	E! True Hollywood Story	
MTV Philippines		Bling # 106	Get Spotted	TRL		Punk'D	Brand New	MTV Hits	VH1 Video Collections
MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Presents		MYX Bandarito	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXLOG
National Geographic		About Asia		Terrorism Week		Megastructures: USS Virginia/ Ultimate Vegas Casino/ [illegible]/ Ultimate Roller Coaster		Storm Stories: Hurricane Ivan/ [illegible] Hurricane	
NBN		Teledyaryo Final Edition				Bantay OCW With Susan K			
Nickelodeon	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Magic Combat				[illegible] Ng Panahon		
Qtv	Mars	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	O, Mare Ko		News On Q	Women's Desk		Irene	Romance
RPN 9		Medium		Invasion		Newswatch Now	Global Window	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
SBN 21		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Friends Again		SBN Music Video	
Solar Sports		Sportsdesk					Sportsdesk	IBF German Open Men's Singles Finals	
Sports Plus	Slipstream	World's Greatest Auto Shows		World Game		Ray Ban Celebrity Poker Challenge			
Star Movies	The Grudge (7:25 PM)			Tremors 3: Back To Perfection			Direct Action (10:45PM)		
Star World	Seinfeld	American Idol	The Simple Life (Series 3)	Scrubs	8 Simple Rules	The Drew Carey Show	Less Than Perfect (Series 2)	Seinfeld	American Idol
Studio 23	The Contender		Alias (8:20 PM)	Desperate Housewives (9:10 PM)		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Erap: All lies; I was convicted in the streets

From page A1

I don't have the conscience to steal money intended for farmers."

The 68-year-old Estrada told the Sandiganbayan that he welcomed the opportunity to present his side in the plunder case. If convicted he faces death by lethal injection.

"I was denied that right in the impeachment trial when prosecutors walked out," he said. "I was not able to defend myself. I was convicted in the streets."

Estrada's impeachment trial in the Senate broke down in January 2001 when prosecutors walked out after they were barred from presenting what they regarded as a critical piece of evidence. Within hours of the nationally televised proceedings, the second People Power revolution broke out and forced Estrada out of Malacañang.

No TV cameras

There were no TV cameras in yesterday's hearing. The Sandiganbayan rejected Estrada's plea that his testimony be broadcast live. Live radio coverage also was barred.

After giving a brief background of his rise from actor to President, Estrada, under the direct examination of former Manila City Prosecutor Jose Flaminiano, rejected Singson's claim that he was close to the former Chief Executive.

He described Singson as an "ordinary friend and political ally." This testimony is regarded as crucial to show that he could not have trusted Singson to engage in activities that could damage his presidency.

Estrada described Singson as "insincere, disloyal and untrustworthy."

To support his denial, Estrada cited his refusal to accept what he said was a $14 million (roughly P700 million) offer of Impsa, an Argentine firm engaged in building power plants, in exchange for a sovereign guarantee. He said the deal "would be bad for the nation."

Scandal after 'leave'

Estrada noted that Malacañang approved the same Impsa deal four days after he took a "leave of absence" as president. He tried to continue his discourse on Impsa but Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio prevented him from doing so.

During Estrada's impeachment trial in 2000, Singson alleged that Estrada received P130 million as kickback from the P200 million tobacco excise. Singson said that the money was delivered by businessman Charlie "Atong" Ang to Estrada's Polk Street residence in San Juan, a charge also denied by Estrada.

Estrada said the Presidential Security Group strictly prohibited the entry of vehicles, except the presidential car, inside his private residence. After he became President, Estrada said he distanced himself from Ang because of his bad media reputation.

Estrada also denied knowing Delia Rajas, Alma Alfaro and Eleuterio Tan, his alleged conspirators in the tobacco excise tax kickback.

After testifying for an hour and a half, the Sandiganbayan special division ordered a two-hour lunch break. The trial resumed shortly after 2 p.m. but lasted for only about an hour following confusion in the marking of some documentary evidence.

Protesters turned back

Several hundred pro-Estrada protesters—screaming "Free Erap!"—attempted to march on the Sandiganbayan but were turned back without incident by riot police armed with shields and truncheons.

Instead, the group held a program in front of St. Peter Parish on Commonwealth Avenue. By noon, the number dwindled to less than a hundred.

Flaminiano expressed satisfaction over Estrada's testimony, which will be continued next Wednesday.

He said that aside from impeaching the testimonies of prosecution witnesses, Estrada would deny and rebut all allegations of plunder and perjury and prove that he was illegally removed by civil society groups conspiring with the Left and Right.

Former Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo, who spearheaded the filing of criminal cases against Estrada, said: "I am satisfied because this is the beginning. They have presented him and that is a start."

Prosecutors allege Estrada amassed about P4 billion ($77 million) in illegal gambling payoffs, tax kickbacks and commissions stashed in secret bank accounts under the alias 'Jose Velarde."

He also faces a minor charge of perjury for allegedly underreporting his assets in 1999.

Flaminiano cited constitutional questions over Estrada's removal and his loss of immunity, but Villa-Ignacio said the Supreme Court had resolved those issues.

"I WAS FRAMED," deposed President Estrada tells the antigraft court and denies that he got huge kickbacks from the tobacco excise taxes as "I don't have the conscience to steal money intended for farmers." AP/BULLIT MARQUEZ

Country is watching

"We expect justice to be rendered fairly," said Dante Jimenez, an anticrime activist who sat inside the packed courtroom. "If there is a perception that it's not, the danger is this might again divide the nation and cause trouble. The country will be watching."

"I am 100-percent sure he will lie. But he is an actor. He can very well fake it," Singson said.

An action film star who mostly portrayed roles as an underdog champion of the poor, Estrada parlayed his massive popularity as a springboard to the presidency, which he won in a landslide in 1998 and pledged would be "the greatest performance of my life."

Estrada's reversal of fortune has been as dramatic as his more than 100 films. Many of his followers predict his dilemma would end like in his movies, where he emerges from near-death dilemmas to triumph in the end.

'Triumph of Truth' CD

Showing his flair for theater, Estrada's camp on Tuesday released a 20-minute video, titled "Triumph of Truth," which claimed the prosecution relied on paid witnesses and failed to prove its case.

The trial started in October 2001. The prosecution rested its case two years later after presenting 76 witnesses and more than 1,500 pieces of evidence. Defense lawyers say Estrada would be their 79th and final witness.

Despite his downfall, Estrada has been at the heart of Ms Arroyo's political troubles. Thousands of his followers tried to storm Malacañang in May 2001 in what she called a failed power grab. Six died in the rioting. Estrada also has been linked to coup plots against Ms Arroyo.

Estrada told reporters earlier that the corruption charges against him and his five years of detention in his Tanay resthouse have consigned him to a "very depressing life," adding that an acquittal would correct all the wrongs heaped on him.

Despite his ordeal and growing health problems, he said he's ready for a political comeback.

Let justice take course

Malacañang asked all sectors to let justice take its "inexorable course" in the Estrada case.

"The fact that (Estrada) was taking the witness stand is a clear proof that due process has been strictly observed in his case," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said Estrada's court appearance could have little impact.

"In law, the weakest of all evidence is the mere denial of the accused if faced with overwhelming direct evidence and testimonies of witnesses," said Nograles, a topnotch lawyer.

Nograles said he did not think Estrada would get back the presidency on acquittal. "His term has already expired," Nograles said.

Erap going back to streets

"He still wants his plunder case settled politically, out of court and on the streets as bared when his camp distributed compact disks containing what he is supposed to testify on his trial today," said Davao del Sur Rep. Douglas Cagas.

Antique Rep. Exequiel Javier said the distribution of Estrada's CDs was useless because the court would only consider his testimony in resolving his case.

"Today is Erap's day of infamy or vindication. Erap should take this opportunity to tell the truth not twist it to save his soul," said Javier. *With reports from Norman Bordadora, DJ Yap, Christine O. Avendaño, Michael Lim Ubac, AP*

Erap and Chavit: Bosom buddies, mortal enemies

From page A1

gambling payoffs and tobacco tax kickbacks in 2000 and started the latter's anguished boat ride out of the Palace.

No one knew if the protagonists were eyeballing each other. They were certainly within speaking (spitting?) distance.

Estrada did not even cast a glance at Singson.

Glad to answer lies

But Estrada later said in an interview: "I saw him and I'm glad I can answer those lies of his."

Asked what he thought of Singson, Estrada snapped with that tough-guy look that had catapulted him to the pinnacle of filmdom and the nation's presidency: "He probably thought he can intimidate me."

During a break two hours into the proceedings, Singson told the INQUIRER, "No matter how well he had practiced his answers with his lawyers, he will have a hard time here because he's still telling lies."

Seated next to private lawyer Arno Sanidad, Singson added: "We're taking notes of those lies so we can counter them later."

Hiding swelling eyes

Asked about the shades, Singson said that his eyes were "swelling" from "lack of sleep."

Estrada's testimony injected new life—at least in terms of courtroom crowd—to a case that has dragged on for five years—largely away from media glare, consigned to the inside pages of newspapers.

Many from the press row conceded that the trial at this point was unlikely to produce any new bombshell from the Estrada camp. His well-oiled media machinery has long been presenting his line of defense through various propaganda videos and pamphlets and discourses by his high-priced lawyers.

THE MAN WHO BLEW THE WHISTLE, Ilocos Sur Gov. Chavit Singson, sits in the courtroom only five seats away from his estranged friend Estrada. AFP

The comforters

Prominent members of his family, led by his wife, Sen. Loi Ejercito, played their usual role as comforters in chief. There were the two sons out of wedlock: San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito whom Estrada sired with Guia Gomez and a teenager—Jake—by former starlet Laarni Enriquez.

While waiting for the hearing to start, Estrada briefly took a seat in between his children—opposition Sen. Jinggoy Estrada and daughter Jackie who was fingering a rosary.

A staunch political ally, former Ambassador Ernesto Maceda, was taking notes of Estrada's direct examination on a yellow pad.

Also around to give moral support were Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile and Makati City Mayor Jejomar Binay.

No more room

Several members of his Cabinet and former classmates from the Ateneo de Manila, which had expelled him from high school after a brawl with a foreign student, also came for Estrada, but they could no longer be accommodated in the jampacked courtroom.

They were instead made to stay at a holding area set for Estrada on the building's sixth floor, according to Estrada's media coordinator Ferdie Ramos.

Ramos said his boss was up as early as 6 a.m. yesterday and took only sandwiches for the most important public appearance of his life since he fled the Palace on a barge.

Ping: Erap knew money for Muslim youth project came from 'jueteng'

From page A1

through his jueteng-funded Erap Muslim Youth Foundation.

"He has not denied that. He said the proceeds from jueteng went directly to the foundation, not to his pocket," said Lacson, a former chief of the Philippine National Police in the Estrada administration.

Novel project

"He told me he wanted to change the war-like culture of the Muslims because the problem in Mindanao was getting worse. He wanted Muslim children to grow up and become intellectuals and not warriors," Lacson said in an interview.

"It was a novel project to start with. He wanted the children of Muslims to study abroad so that the next generation, probably once they return from scholarships in Harvard, Wharton, would be partners in the development of the country. Instead of carrying guns, they will help in the economy and other fields," he added.

Lacson issued his statements yesterday as Estrada took the witness stand in his plunder trial in the Sandiganbayan.

Lacson said Estrada's lawyers wanted him to testify but he declined because his testimony might turn out to be "incriminatory" to the former President.

He tried to stop Estrada

"The prosecution has rested its case and I already indicated that I will not testify for the defense. So, I really don't know what the effect would be on the case," he said.

He added that he did not expect Estrada to feel hurt by his statements since the former President had not denied that the estimated P200 million foundation funds "came from jueteng."

Asked for comment, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada: "Well, I hope he has the evidence to prove it but I will still wait for the testimony of President Erap once the issue of the Erap Muslim Youth Foundation is going to be discussed."

Lacson recounted that he tried to discourage Estrada from pushing through with his plan about the foundation after he won the 1998 elections not just because it was illegal but also because it would hinder reforms in the PNP.

"I disagreed with him on the method of how to get the funds. I told him "Sir, *larong lupa ito*. It is very hard to keep it secret because from the financier to the operators to the cabos, personnel and even bettors, *kubradores*, they would name drop," he said.

Payoff rejected

"Even if it were not true, they would say 'We're cleared to do this and that.' I reminded him of course that however noble his intention was, if the source (of the funds) was illegal, what would come out would also be illegal," he added.

Lacson said he also informed Estrada a day before he was appointed PNP chief in November 1999 that he would not accept the P5 million worth of jueteng money that was allegedly given monthly to his predecessor, Roberto Lastimoso.

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF ISABELA
Ilagan

Office of the Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Provincial Government of Isabela, through its Bids and Awards Committee, is inviting interested exclusive distributors and/or suppliers in the pre-eligibility activity and to participate in the sealed competitive bidding for the procurement of reconditioned dump trucks and heavy equipment on a lot-basis.

All particulars relative to the eligibility, bid evaluation, and award of contract shall be governed by the provisions of R A. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

SCHEDULE OF BIDDING ACTIVITIES:

Availability of Bid Documents	March 24-29, 2006, excluding Saturday and Sunday, 8AM to 5PM at the BAC Secretariat's Office, Capitol, Ilagan, Isabela.
Pre-Bid Conference	March 30, 2006 at 10 AM, Governor's Mini-Conference Hall, Capitol, Ilagan, Isabela
Deadline of Submission of Eligibility Requirements and Bids	April 11, 2006 at 9 30 AM, BAC Secretariat's Office, Capitol, Ilagan, Isabela
Opening of Bids	April 11, 2006 at 10 00 AM, Governor's Mini-Conference Hall, Capitol, Ilagan, Isabela
Approved Budget Contract	Php 34.150-Million

Complete set of bid proposals/forms may be acquired from the BAC Secretariat's Office, Capitol, Ilagan, Isabela upon payment of non-refundable bidding fee of TEN THOUSAND PESOS (Php 10,000.00) at the Provincial Treasurer's Office.

The Provincial Government of Isabela reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any required formality and award the contract to any bidder whose proposal has been evaluated by the BAC as the most advantageous The Provincial Goverment assumes no obligations whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense or loss that they may incur in the preparation of their bids Neither does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) MA. THERESA ARANETA-FLORES
Provincial Administrator and
BAC Chairperson

(PDI--March 18 & 23, 2006)

PNOC-ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Energy Complex, Merritt Road
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City
Tel. No. 893-1320, Local 5282 / 5288 / 5281
PNOC

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND REBID / BID

The PNOC-Energy Development Corporation is inviting all interested suppliers to apply and submit sealed bids for the supply and delivery of the following

	Approved Budget
*Various Sizes of CS SAW/ERW and Seamless Pipes under **FGJ 50817***	*PHP 5,145,000 00*
*Two Hundred Eighty (280) Cubic Meters Liquid Caustic Soda under **GT 517414***	*PHP 4,650,000.00*
*Steel Fence Materials under **GO 516113***	*PHP 2,900,000.00*

Eligibility forms and bidding documents shall be available for issuance upon payment of a non-refundable fee at the above address based on the following schedules:

PR No.	Date of Issue	Cost per Document	Contact Person
FGJ 50817	March 15, 2006	PHP 400 00	Ms Ma Cristina Lynn M Mercado loc 5282
GT 517414	March 16, 2006	PHP 400 00	Mr Anthony E Cinaco loc 5288
GO 516113	February 22, 2006	PHP 400 00	Mr Edgar Allan T Sademas loc 5281

For purposes of clarifying certain matters, a pre-bidding conference shall also be held on **March 23, 2006 for FGJ 50817 and GT 517414 , 2:00 p.m.** at the above address.

Applications for eligibility and sealed bids shall be submitted to, and registered with the PNOC-EDC Supply Management Department at the above address, and thereafter dropped in the padlocked bid box thereat not later than **2:00 p.m. (Supply Management Department Wall Clock Time) of April 6, 2006 for FGJ 50817 and GT 517414 and March 24, 2006 for GO 516113.** Public opening of bids shall follow immediately thereafter. **Late bids shall not be accepted.**

Prospective bidders shall signify conformance to the bidding terms and conditions, as required, and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution Source of funding is from Internal Cash Generation of PNOC-EDC. All bids should be within the Approved Budget for the Contract in order to qualify.

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation reserves the right to annul the bidding process, to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid which is most advantageous to PNOC-EDC without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground(s) for PNOC-EDC's action

Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI-March 18 & 23, 2006)

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75 fall in Bulacan shabu market raid

BOCAUE, BULACAN—AT LEAST 75 PEOPLE were arrested in a compound in Barangay Lolomboy here on Tuesday, a slum area likened by policemen to the "shabu flea market" that was recently raided in Pasig City.

Supt. Buenaventura Viray, police chief here, said agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) arrested the suspects while some of them were using shabu (metamphetamine hydrochloride) inside shanties and rooms in a compound on Buntisan Street.

Others were arrested for possessing shabu and illegal drug paraphernalia.

Viray said the raid was conducted after a month of surveillance.

He said information provided by the NBI's Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operation Task Force (AIDSOTF) showed that the owners of the shanties rent rooms where drug users can use shabu in private. Users, Viray said, pay between P10 and P20 as rent for these rooms.

He said they were monitoring activities on Buntisan Street after several illegal drug suspects they arrested were found to be living or frequenting that area.

Viray welcomed the participation of the NBI-AIDSOTF and PDEA in the raid, saying the local police have limited resources and personnel to carry out the raid.

The Bulacan police office, he said, recently cited the Bocaue police for the most solved illegal drug cases in 2005.

A 55-YEAR-old man is escorted by NBI agents as he and 74 other drug users and peddlers are presented to media after a raid in Bocaue, Bulacan. REM ZAMORA

Viray said the problem on illegal drugs persisted in the area as many of the suspects managed to post bail and return to the illegal drug trade.

He said most residents living on Buntisan Street are unemployed and have resorted to the illegal drug trade either to feed their families or to sustain their dependency on illegal drugs.

Gov. Josefina de la Cruz, a resident of Lolomboy, cited the NBI-AIDSOTF and PDEA for a "job well done."

De la Cruz confirmed reports that the area has been the subject of police monitoring "for so long."

Viray said the full cooperation of the community and local officials is needed to stamp out the illegal drug problem in the area.

The suspects, he said, were taken to the NBI office in Manila for investigation.

Last month, several shanties in Pasig City were found to have been doubling as drug dens.

More than 300 people, including several minors, were taken into custody during the raid.
Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

SORRY! NAGBAGO NA KAMI!
NO MARIJUANA
ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Town loses image as 'marijuana capital'

KAPANGAN, BENGUET—THIS town's reign as the country's "marijuana capital" is already over, Mayor Rogelio Leon said.

"The town no longer hosts hectares of marijuana plantations. Production has dropped by 80 percent," Leon said, quoting records from the police.

The keys to the success of the town's antimarijuana drive, he said, were the police's eradication campaign held from 2004 to 2005 and the effort of local officials to make farmers feel that the government was not neglecting their plight.

"People should no longer think that our town is the major source of marijuana. There are still plantations but these are found in lots that are really inaccessible and found in boundary areas," he said.

Leon said the local government started moves to destroy the remaining marijuana fields in seven sitios (sub villages) of the remote villages of Gadang, Sagubo, Beling Belis and Pudong.

The effort included the propagation of the root crop yacon and anthurium as alternative crops for farmers, silkworm raising, and the delineation of the town's forest reserves and watershed to prompt barangay officials to participate in their protection.

Last year, local officials signed an agreement with the Philippine National Police to introduce yacon to the seven sitios where marijuana was cultivated.

They also adopted silkworm as the town's main product for the "One Town One Product" program of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Leon said in 2002, 25 families were found involved in marijuana cultivation in the seven sitios.

"But now, most of them had shied away from planting [marijuana]," he said.

Senior Supt. Alexander Pumecha, spokesperson of the Cordillera police, said policemen on Tuesday seized 15 bricks of marijuana worth P375,000 in a house in La Trinidad town.

Pumecha said the owner of a boarding house in the town informed the police about the marijuana bricks left in a room in his house.

On Monday, police seized 472 kilograms of marijuana from a man in Bontoc, Mt. Province, who was traveling from Kalinga.
Delmar Cariño with a report from Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ROUNDUP

Prelate thanks donors

SAN PABLO CITY—Maasin, Southern Leyte Bishop Most Rev. Precioso D. Cantillas thanked Bishop Leo M. Drona of the Diocese of San Pablo here for the donation of P494,000 in check raised from the more than 80 parishes in Laguna. Fr. Rene Eriga, San Pablo Diocesan Social Action director, who handed a big portion of the money last Feb. 23, told priests in a Presbyteral Council meeting here on March 13 that Laguna was among the first dioceses that extended help to the victims of the tragedy. The diocese was also among the first to respond to the Infanta Prelature's call for help when a massive landslide buried alive about 1,000 residents there in 2004.
Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Hot lumber seized

LEGAZPI CITY—Soldiers from the Army's 2nd Infantry Battalion, headed by Lt. Ernesto Pascual, intercepted some 5,000 board feet of illegally cut logs at Barangay Lahung, Juban, Sorsogon last Thursday. A military report said the illegal logs, which were supposed to be brought to this city, were turned over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Sorsogon.
Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

200 casuals 'shortchanged'

SAAN NAPUNTA YUNG KALAHATI?

LEGAZPI CITY—Some 200 casual employees of the Department of Public Works and Highways regional office here have complained of receiving only half of the benefits they were entitled to at the start of this year. Instead of the P4,000 clothing allowance and P2,000 productivity allowance they were supposed to receive, they were merely given P2,000 and P1,000, respectively. Orlando Roces, DPWH Bicol director, said the cut was due to the slow release of the budget for projects from the central office from where such allowances are being taken. Roces said while at least five projects normally arrive for implementation every month, only two to three projects have come in at this time.
Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Jail warden axed

BUTUAN CITY—The city jail warden here was relieved following allegations he was behind the proliferation of illegal drugs in the city's prison facility. Senior Supt. Romeo Hacaban, regional director of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) based in Surigao City, said he ordered the relief of Senior Insp. Prescisito Heje after an inmate accused him of involvement in the drug trade with inmates. Casiano Abrinica, a self-confessed drug peddler, said Heje tolerated drug deals inside the prison in exchange for money. Heje, he said, was also behind other illegal activities in the facility. Heje has denied the charges and said he was willing to be investigated.
Franklin M. Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Virus-free migratory birds

COTABATO CITY—Agriculture officials declared migratory birds in Central Mindanao, particularly those in the Liguasan Marsh, free from the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu virus. The marsh, a known bird sanctuary because of its lush forest, is about 1,200 sq km and lies in the heart of the region. John Pascual, Department of Agriculture livestock coordinator, said samples taken from migratory birds' sanctuaries tested negative of the bird flu virus. The Regional Bird Flu Task Force is monitoring 20 critical areas—the Liguasan Marsh, coastal areas of Kalamansig and Lebak in Sultan Kudarat, Kalanganan in this city, Sarangani Bay and General Santos City. The DA's Livestock Division and the Bird Flu Task Force have deputized 12 bird flu monitoring teams.
Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau

DILG-ARMM hands full

COTABATO CITY—At least two election controversies involving the mayor of Kabuntalan, Maguindanao and the governor of Lanao del Sur are being handled by the Department of Interior and Local Government in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DILG-ARMM).
Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

LYN RILLON
SPLASH
A tourist slides down a waterfall in the Loboc River in Loboc, Bohol that became famous as the shooting location of a movie that starred actor Cesar Montano.

Samar folk told it's safe to return

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—THE TOP military official on Samar Island yesterday sought to assure residents of three Samar towns that it was safe to return to their homes following a mass evacuation due to military operations against communist rebels.

Major Gen. Bonifacio Ramos, commanding general of the 8th Infantry Division based in Samar's capital town of Catbalogan, said he would personally assure them of their safety.

"They should return to their homes. I can assure them of their safety. The Philippine Army is there to defend them from the enemies," Ramos said.

He also dismissed allegations that the soldiers are responsible for the displacement of these people.

"They are afraid of the enemies roaming in their areas. It's the reason (why) they seek safe grounds," Ramos added.

Ramos confirmed that about a thousand residents of three hinterland villages of Motiong town and another interior village at the nearby San Jose de Buan fled to their town centers.

But he said these villagers came down because of harassment by the New People's Army.

Ramos said the military would continue the operations because "this is the only way that the people of these interior towns could be assured of a continued and peaceful existence."

Evacuees from Bobon, Northern Samar had returned to their homes, Ramos said.

"We provided them the vehicles and even food. We are happy that they were convinced to return home. They are safe there," the general said.

A WOMAN waits in anguish for news on loved ones who were buried in a landslide in Guinsaugon village in St. Bernard, Southern Leyte. The landslide struck with no warning. PDI PHOTO

MGB lacks equipment to monitor landslides

By Juan Escandor Jr.,
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

NAGA CITY—THE MINES AND Geosciences Bureau (MGB) lacks the capacity to predict the occurrence of landslides and flooding in the Bicol region because of the absence of equipment to monitor and record geological activities, according to a geologist here.

Arnel Jusi, MGB chief geologist, said the government cannot afford to provide the equipment that can monitor in detail geological activities in the flood-prone areas and places where landslides and mudslides could occur.

Jusi said that flooding, landslide or mudslide are predictable events but they need to monitor the rate of movements in the areas identified as prone to these using a device designed for it.

He said despite the lack of equipment, the MGB can provide local governments with technical knowhow on the characteristics of the areas prone to flooding, landslide or mudslide, such as areas with steep elevation, few vegetation and clay porous soil.

But he said the indicators must be extrapolated with the amount of rainfall in a given period and the changes it has caused on the areas so a prediction can be made on the occurrence of a landslide or mudslide.

He revealed that the government-operated flood monitoring station in Camaligan, Camarines Sur could generate enough data on the level and duration of flooding in the Bicol river basin area.

But Jusi said the Camaligan facility has limitations in predicting the extent of flooding.

He said the MGB helps local government units (LGUs) respond to the danger of landslides and flooding by identifying the areas where they may possibly occur.

The geologist said LGUs are responsible for the detailed monitoring of the identified areas as well as the disaster response required while the MGB provides the necessary technical requirements when requested.

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Tale of 2 Pinoy workers in Saudi

Family wants his remains to be sent home in Albay

By Michael B. Jaucian
Legazpi City

UNTIL WHEN WILL WE WAIT FOR MY HUSband's body to be brought back home?" Teary-eyed Annie Liza Llorando was disappointed upon learning from the regional Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa) that her husband's return from Saudi Arabia would take some time.

When they last talked by phone on Feb. 23, Reynard Felix Llorando promised his wife that he would be home for his 37th birthday this month. That pledge, along with his dream of giving his family a decent life, suddenly vanished four days later.

Llorando and another Filipino, fellow construction worker Abel Monterela, were killed when Saudi police, on a manhunt for militants, sprayed their shuttle bus with bullets while passing through Rawda District in Riyadh.

Three other Filipinos in the bus were wounded.

Breadwinner

"The death of Felix was a big loss for the family. He was the breadwinner and our hope so that our children can go to school," Annie Liza said.

Llorando, who hailed from Legazpi City in Albay, left behind a wife and three children—John Joshua, 8; Jojo Ray, 5; and Julz Anton, 3.

Annie Liza recalled that four days before the Riyadh shooting, her husband called to greet her on her birthday.

"Felix was very excited to go home on March 23 as he wanted to celebrate his 37th birthday in the company of his family," she said.

His contract was set to expire in April and he did not plan to return to the Saudi capital, she said.

"What he wanted was to be with his family and put up a copier business in Legazpi," Annie Liza said.

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of the Interior Saudi has pledged full financial assistance for Llorando's family, according to Ma. Cristina D. Zantua, manager of the Public Employment Services Office (Peso) in Legazpi, citing a text message sent to her mobile phone by the Owwa.

Marble setter

Zantua said Llorando was able to work in Riyadh through the Peso program. In April 2004, she said, Llorando applied for work as a marble setter through Sam Seven Manpower Inc.

"Llorando had done a great job in Riyadh because he found an ideal working environment and employer," Zantua said.

Since he arrived, Llorando had never complained of anything against his employer, she said. Annie Liza said her husband was treated like a family member and was considered a responsible employee by his boss.

Owwa regional director Robert P. Bassig said the family would receive P200,000 in financial assistance in the form of insurance from the agency's Social Benefits Department, plus P20,000 in death benefits.

Bassig, however, stressed that the money would be released two days after the arrival of Llorando's body and the family had submitted the necessary documents.

Autopsy report

Asked how long it will take for the remains to be flown back to the country, he said it depended on the process and the results of the investigation and autopsy conducted by the Saudi police.

The autopsy report was expected to be finished "in a couple of weeks" by the Office of the Forensic Medicine Department of the Riyadh Medical Complex, said Philippine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Bahnarim Guinomla.

It will be forwarded to the police center handling the case upon completion, Guinomla said in his latest message to the Department of Foreign Affairs regional office in Legazpi.

The DFA, through the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers, has coordinated with the Riyadh Medical Complex for the issuance of a medical report so that the employer could begin the process of repatriation of the remains.

If Llorando's family can prove that they belong to the "poorest of the poor," one of the worker's children can qualify for an Owwa scholarship under its "Tuloy Aral Project."

ANNIE Liza Llorando shows a picture of her husband Felix, who was killed while on his way to work in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

Unable to bear abuses, she jumped out of a building window

By Romulo O. Ponte
Pangil, Laguna

SHORTLY AFTER JOCELYN J. MENDOZA, 38, arrived at her employer's apartment unit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in late December last year, her travel documents and mobile phone were confiscated.

She was told to start working immediately and never leave the unit on the second floor of the building.

She could take a bath, but only for 15 minutes and only every four days. Somebody would be monitoring outside the bathroom to make sure she would not exceed the time limit.

She would also be allowed to change her underwear, but only every four days, too.

Worse, she was beaten by her female employer almost every day.

Unable to bear her sufferings, Jocelyn decided to escape by jumping out of the window on Feb. 16. She survived to tell her tale.

A secretarial undergraduate of the National College of Business and Arts in Manila, Jocelyn worked for Uniden Philippines in Taguig, Metro Manila and in Cabuyao, Laguna for 12 years before it shut down.

Her family said she decided to apply for work abroad since her age made her ineligible to work in other factories in the country.

She left for Saudi Arabia on Dec. 27, 2005, shaking and trembling as she was alone.

First communication

Jocelyn's younger sister, Marissa M. Teoxon, said the family never knew what happened to her until another Filipino migrant worker in Saudi Arabia secretly called up a relative in Magdalena, Laguna on Feb. 22. The relative was told to inform her that Jocelyn was in a hospital and needed help, she said.

Marissa, 35, a midwife, was also advised to seek the help of the Philippine Embassy in contacting Jocelyn, saying fellow Filipinos were helping her.

Marissa and only brother John Israel did not waste time and reached Jocelyn at the Arar Central Hospital in Riyadh. She had just gained consciousness.

From their talk, the siblings learned about details of Jocelyn's ordeal. They also asked the nongovernment Pusong Mamon Task Force for help in looking after their sister.

Jocelyn's back and left arm were broken. A stainless steel has been inserted to support her backbone.

No other information was given, but the family was told that she can already move her head, hands and feet.

Only means

Marissa quoted Jocelyn as saying that jumping from the window of her employer's apartment was her only way of escaping torment.

"I was literally a slave in the hands of my female employer," Jocelyn told her mother Florencia from her hospital bed. Her voice was trembling.

Her employer's husband was very kind to her, Jocelyn said. But when she reported to him how she was being maltreated, the wife's cruelty worsened. The woman blew her top when Jocelyn asked why she was being made to do the laundry daily instead of every other day.

Her employer allegedly punched her hard at the back and was about to punish her more when Jocelyn ran and jumped out of the window.

Good Samaritans

As she was sprawled on the ground, Jocelyn was almost lifeless, Florencia was told. The employer wanted to drag her back into the building, but neighbors and bystanders prevailed upon her. Jocelyn was rushed to the hospital and placed under intensive care.

For seven days, she was fighting for her life, Filipino nurses and attendants who had assisted her told her family.

On Feb. 24, Florencia asked for assistance from Mariano Dumia of the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers under the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, and from Marianito Roque, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration administrator.

Marissa said the Owwa told her that the agency that sent her sister to Saudi Arabia should take care of her hospital needs.

On March 8, Emma V. Sinclair, Owwa officer-in-charge, summoned Rowena C. Nuqui, president of Al Farabi Manpower Services Inc. in Manila, for a meeting at the agency's regional office on March 13 to discuss Jocelyn's case.

Sinclair also alerted Angel L. Borja, Philippine labor attaché in Polo-Riyadh, and Eduardo E. Bellido, welfare officer, to visit Jocelyn and see to it that she was receiving adequate medical care.

Police presence

Since Feb, 22, Marissa said she had talked with Jocelyn more than 10 times. The last time was on the evening of March 7, when her sister complained about the presence of several policemen outside her room. Jocelyn may have thought they were sent by her employer to get her back so she could be jailed, Marissa said.

The incident prompted Marissa to plead for help from hospital authorities to arrange her sister's immediate flight back to the Philippines.

As soon as the doctor allows her discharge, the Owwa would help facilitate her flight back home, Marissa has assured Jocelyn. Nurses have told Marissa that foreign workers confined in the hospital usually receive treatment for one and a half months before they are sent back to their home countries.

Worried that her sister may be suffering from severe pain, depression and trauma, Marissa appealed that she be allowed to travel to Riyadh to take care of her. But Owwa officials discouraged her, citing the difficulty of entering Saudi Arabia.

'Friendster' leads to arrest of San Pablo massacre suspect

By Marlon Ramos
City of Sta. Rosa, Laguna

A WEBSITE DEDICATED to social networking proved vital in solving crime incidents.

On March 9, agents of the National Bureau of Investigation arrested one of five men suspected of shooting and killing four people in San Pablo City in Laguna two months ago. One of the two wounded survivors positively identified him based on pictures posted on the suspect's Friendster account.

Friendster is a popular website where users meet new acquaintances and communicate with former friends.

The suspect, Rexson Hizon, 27, who belongs to an influential family in San Pablo, was arrested based on the testimony of Joey Belen, 21, who suffered bullet wounds in the right leg and foot, according to NBI-Laguna chief Olivo Ramos.

Police sketch

Hizon vehemently denied any involvement in the killing, saying the artist's sketch released by the police did not resemble him.

"The sketch is very far from reality. It doesn't look like me. I have nothing to do with what you are saying)," Hizon told Belen in Filipino.

Hizon was caught at his house on Barleta Street in San Pablo, a day before he was scheduled to fly to the United States where police believed he intended to hide.

In a press briefing held at his office in Sta. Rosa City the next day, Ramos announced that NBI agents swooped down on Hizon's house, bearing a search warrant issued by a local court.

The NBI official said Belen had positively identified Hizon as the man who poked a gun at him while taking his wristwatch and ring when he saw a photo taken from the suspect's Friendster account. The photo shows Hizon holding a 38 cal. revolver which, according to the NBI, was described exactly by the victim as one of the guns used in the killing.

Police lineup

In a police lineup, Belen again pointed at Hizon as one of the assailants.

"[We believe we have a strong case against the suspect] as the victim himself identified Hizon as the one who pointed the gun at him. Belen said the suspect even spoke briefly with him as he ordered him to remove his ring and watch," Ramos said.

Records showed that Belen, his older brother John Andrew, and four of their friends were sitting in front of their house in Mariflor Subdivision, Barangay del Remedio on the midnight of Jan. 10 when five armed men alighted from a white Toyota Corolla and approached them.

The intruders ordered the victims to hand over their personal belongings. Suddenly, they opened fire at the group. Four of the victims died on the spot.

The gunmen quickly fled the scene.

Belen and Aldwin Villaruel survived the attack. They were confined at the hospital for treatment for more than a month.

Ramos said the real motive for the shooting had yet to be established.

Thrill killing?

At first, police investigators thought that the incident was an offshoot of a fraternity war. "But there are indications that it was a thrill killing," Ramos said.

Hizon said he did not intend to leave the country to hide. He said he was already a US immigrant.

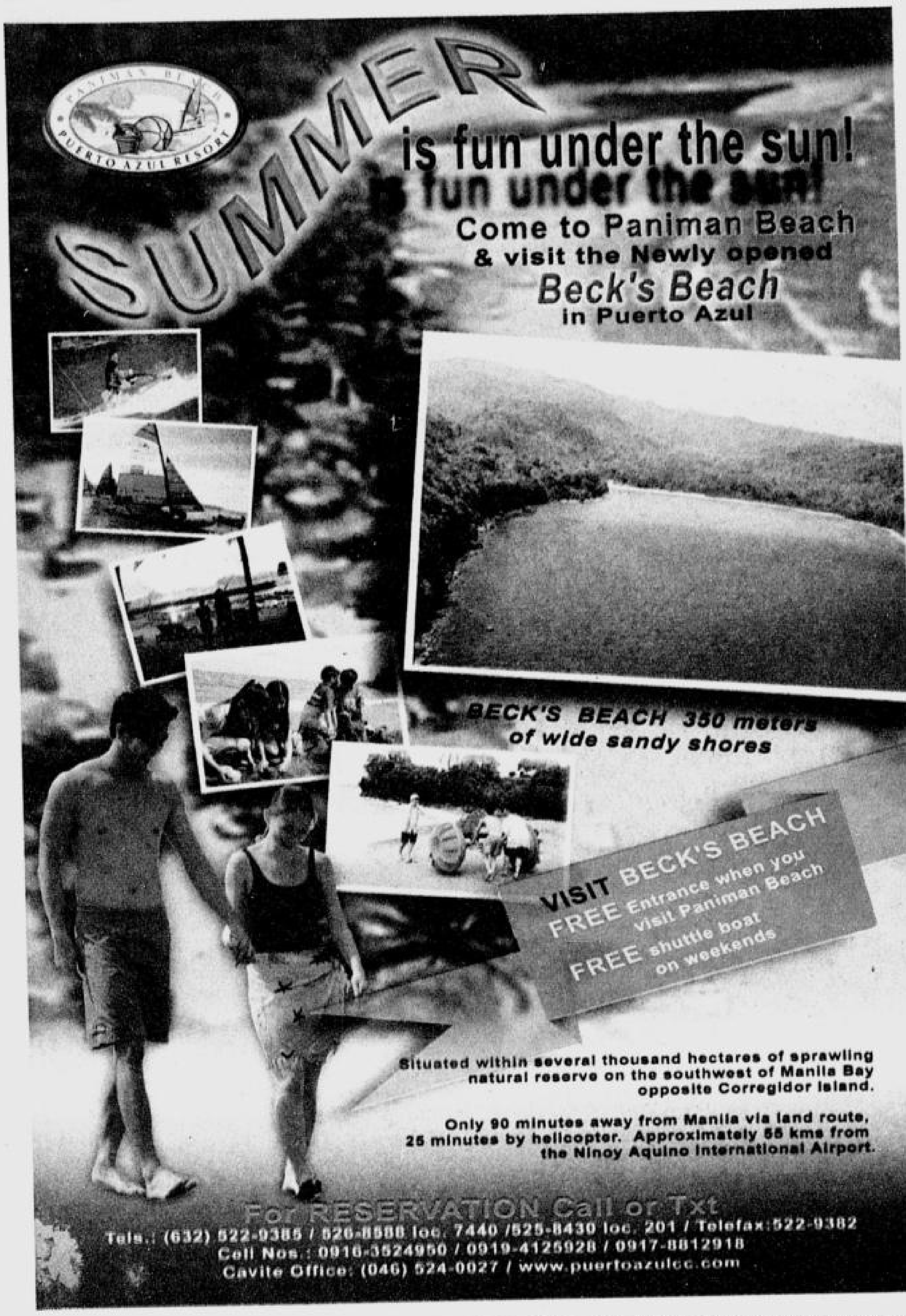
But Belen said he was very sure it was Hizon who pointed the gun at him.

"We were pleading for our lives but you did not listen to us. I know in my heart and in my mind that you were one of the men who shot us … This is the only way I can give justice to my brother," Belen retorted to the suspect.

Senior Supt. Elmo Francis Sarona, San Pablo police chief, said charges of robbery with multiple homicide and of double frustrated homicide had been filed against Hizon and four "John Does."

Despite the arrest, Sarona said the case could not be considered solved. The other suspects had yet to be identified, he said, and robbery had to be established as the real motive.

Sarona said the other suspects could also belong to wealthy and influential families in the city. "We will continue with our investigation and arrest the other suspects who, we believe, are still in Laguna," he said.



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SUBIC RAPE CASE

Court rejects bid to defer GIs' trial

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY—A LOCAL COURT HERE yesterday rejected a petition to defer the arraignment of four US Marines accused of rape while the alleged victim, who was among 300 women demonstrators outside, questions the legality of a bilateral agreement that prevents the Philippines from gaining custody of the accused.

Judge Renato Dilag said he saw no legal basis to defer the hearing, which has been set for Friday.

He pointed out in a two-page ruling that the Supreme Court had upheld the constitutionality of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) in at least five cases. The agreement grants US authorities custody of American troops accused of committing crimes in the Philippines.

"I don't want to delay the case," Dilag told The Associated Press.

He said lawyers for the Marines had promised to bring their clients to the court on Friday.

Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith has admitted to "consensual sex" with the 22-year-old woman but has denied raping her. Lance Cpl. Keith Silkwood, Lance Cpl. Dominic Duplantis and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier were allegedly in the same van, cheering on Smith, prosecutors charged.

The soldiers, who belong to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Force stationed in Okinawa, Japan, are accused of the capital charge of rape and conspiracy to commit rape. The US Embassy in Manila has custody of the men.

Evalyn Ursua, one of the lawyers of the 22-year-old complainant, said her client planned to file another motion Thursday to defer the arraignment. Even if that is rejected, "my client will not be there because we're not going to get a fair trial," Ursua said.

Outside the court, about 300 women activists demanded that the court declare the VFA unconstitutional and denounced Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez for indicating earlier that charges against Silkwood, Duplantis and Carpentier may be downgraded.

The alleged rape victim, her face half-covered by a purple scarf, stood almost unnoticed among the protesters as speakers took turns lambasting Gonzalez.

It was the first time that the woman, known by the pseudonym "Nicole," appeared in public since the alleged rape took place in November last year. Organizers of the "Task Force Subic Rape," a coalition of 14 women organizations, and Ursua confirmed to the INQUIRER that Nicole was among the demonstrators.

Locked up

She told the INQUIRER by phone later that she "drew courage and strength" by being among the protesters. She said she cried at one point upon the realization she was "not alone in my battle."

Asked how she felt when Dilag denied her lawyers' motion, she said she was "angry" because she believed the accused soldiers should be locked up in a Philippine jail.

The alleged rape took place inside a moving van on Nov. 1, 2005 at the nearby Subic Bay Freeport where she was vacationing at the time. The soldiers were then on furlough after the RP-US war games "Talon Vision."

In throwing out the petition to defer the arraignment and declare the VFA unconstitutional, Dilag read a portion of the Supreme Court's ruling which states: "Hence, we cannot readily plead the Constitution as a convenient excuse for noncompliance with our obligations, duties and responsibilities under international law."

He also declined to issue a new arrest warrant against the soldiers, saying the issues of custody and jurisdiction had been extensively discussed in his two previous orders. *With reports from AP and Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

LOTTO RESULT

EZ2
14 1

SUERTRES
9 8 8

FOUR DIGIT
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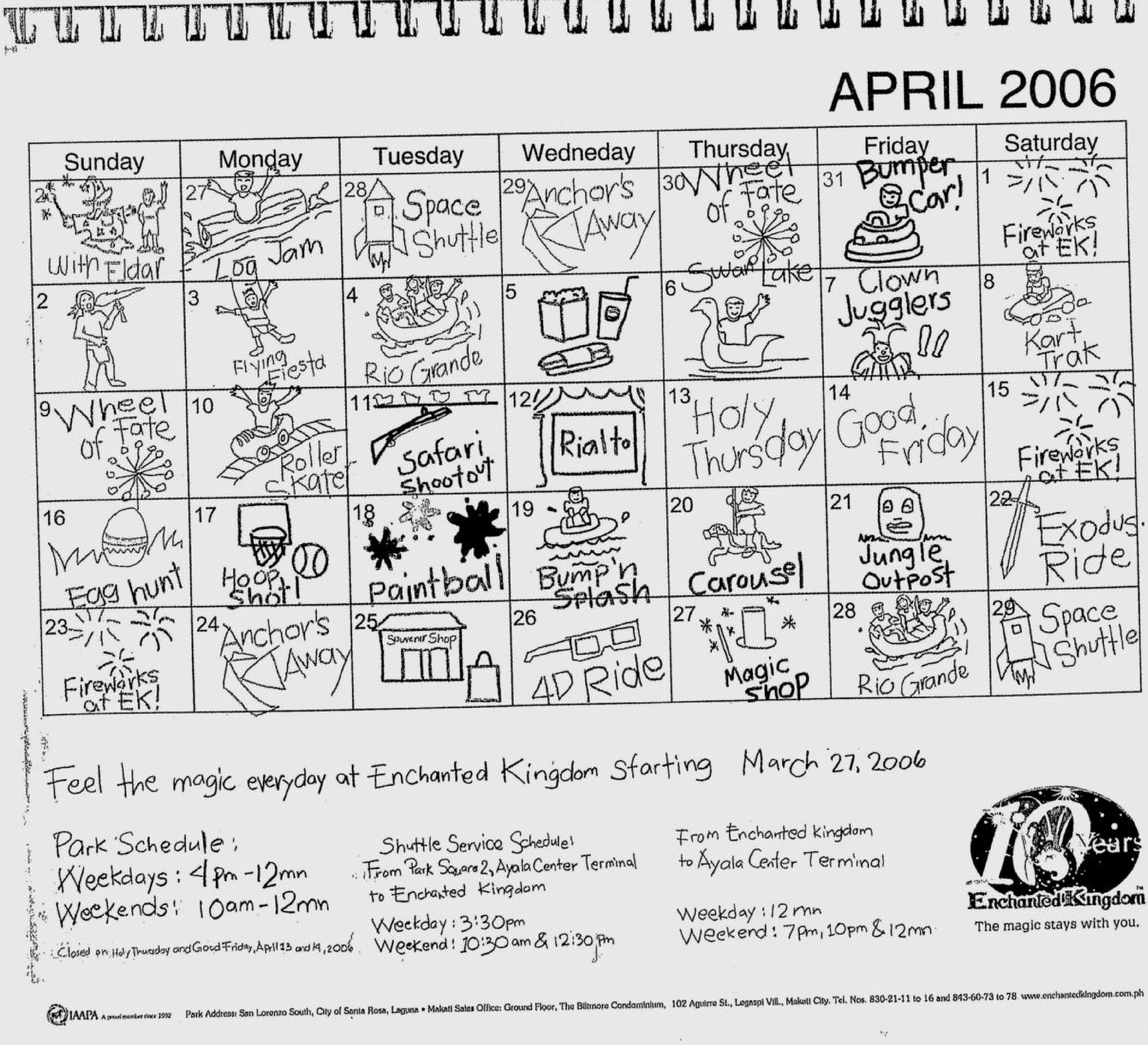
APRIL 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wedneday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 With Eldar	27 Log Jam	28 Space Shuttle	29 Anchor's Away	30 Wheel of Fate	31 Bumper Car!	1 Fireworks at EK!
2	3 Flying Fiesta	4 Rio Grande	5	6 Swan Lake	7 Clown Jugglers !!	8 Kart Trak
9 Wheel of Fate	10 Roller Skater	11 Safari Shootout	12 Rialto	13 Holy Thursday	14 Good Friday	15 Fireworks at EK!
16 Egg hunt	17 Hoop Shot!	18 Paintball	19 Bump'n Splash	20 Carousel	21 Jungle Outpost	22 Exodus Ride
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Grade II student sues teacher

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE TEACHER WHO FORCED her students to eat pencil shavings was charged with child abuse yesterday at the Taguig City Prosecutor's Office.

Jastine Caraga, a Grade II student at the Silangan Elementary School in Barangay Upper Bicutan, Taguig, was accompanied by her mother, Adelina and a representative from the Office of the Social Welfare Development when she subscribed to her complaint before a panel of prosecutors.

Caraga was the classmate of Delmar Redota, who died after their teacher, Brenda Elbambuena, forced them to eat pencil shavings in class last March 8.

Redota died a week later of acute tonsillitis and pneumonia.

Student recalls incident

Caraga told the prosecutors that Elbambuena was sweeping the floor of their classroom when someone threw pencil shavings into their air.

The teacher forced her and Redota to swallow the pencil shavings because she thought that the two were playing a prank on her, she added.

"She was really angry and even cursed us. And then she asked me to open my mouth and then she fed me the pencil shavings," Caraga said.

Elbambuena allegedly did the same thing to her Redota, the girl added. But while she was able to spit out all the pencil shavings forced into her mouth, Redota swallowed them, Caraga said.

Change of heart

Redota's mother, Diana, earlier told the INQUIRER that she did not want her daughter to be autopsied. But yesterday, she said that she had changed her mind.

Prosecutor Jaime A. Cubillo said that while the autopsy would determine the real cause of Redota's death, it would also help them find out who should be held responsible for it.

Should the autopsy results point to Elbambuena as being responsible for the girl's death, she could be charged with homicide.

The prosecutors also directed the school principal, Remedios Antonio, to submit an affidavit on the results of an investigation she conducted into the incident.

Elbambuena, who was just substituting for another teacher when the incident happened, has allegedly gone into hiding after the incident.

A preliminary investigation has been set by prosecutors next week.

DepEd orders review

Following the incident, the Department of Education has ordered a review of the guidelines for the recruitment of new teachers.

DepEd Officer-in charge Fe Hidalgo said in hiring new teachers, the department would give more emphasis to psychological factors, specifically a teacher's behavioral reactions to certain conditions and situations.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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4 men, woman rob QC bank in 10 minutes

By DJ Yap

FOUR MEN AND A WOMAN ROBBED A BANK in Novaliches, Quezon City yesterday, carting away an undetermined amount of cash.

Police said the robbers only spent 10 minutes inside the bank.

According to investigators, a woman entered the Premiere Bank in Forest Hill Subdivision, Gulod on Quirino Highway at about 10 a.m., followed by a man.

As the two pretended to be clients, the man suddenly grabbed the shotgun of the lone security guard, according to PO2 Joel Gagaza of the criminal investigation division of the Quezon City Police District.

The man then called in three of his companions who herded the employees—three tellers, a courier, and the guard—inside the comfort room and locked them in, Gagaza said.

Vault closed

With the woman serving as a lookout, the men tried to open the bank vault with no success.

CID head Supt. Procopio Lipana said the first door of the vault had been open when the robbers entered the bank, but they could not open the second door, which was protected by a time-delay lock.

They abandoned the effort after a few minutes, he added.

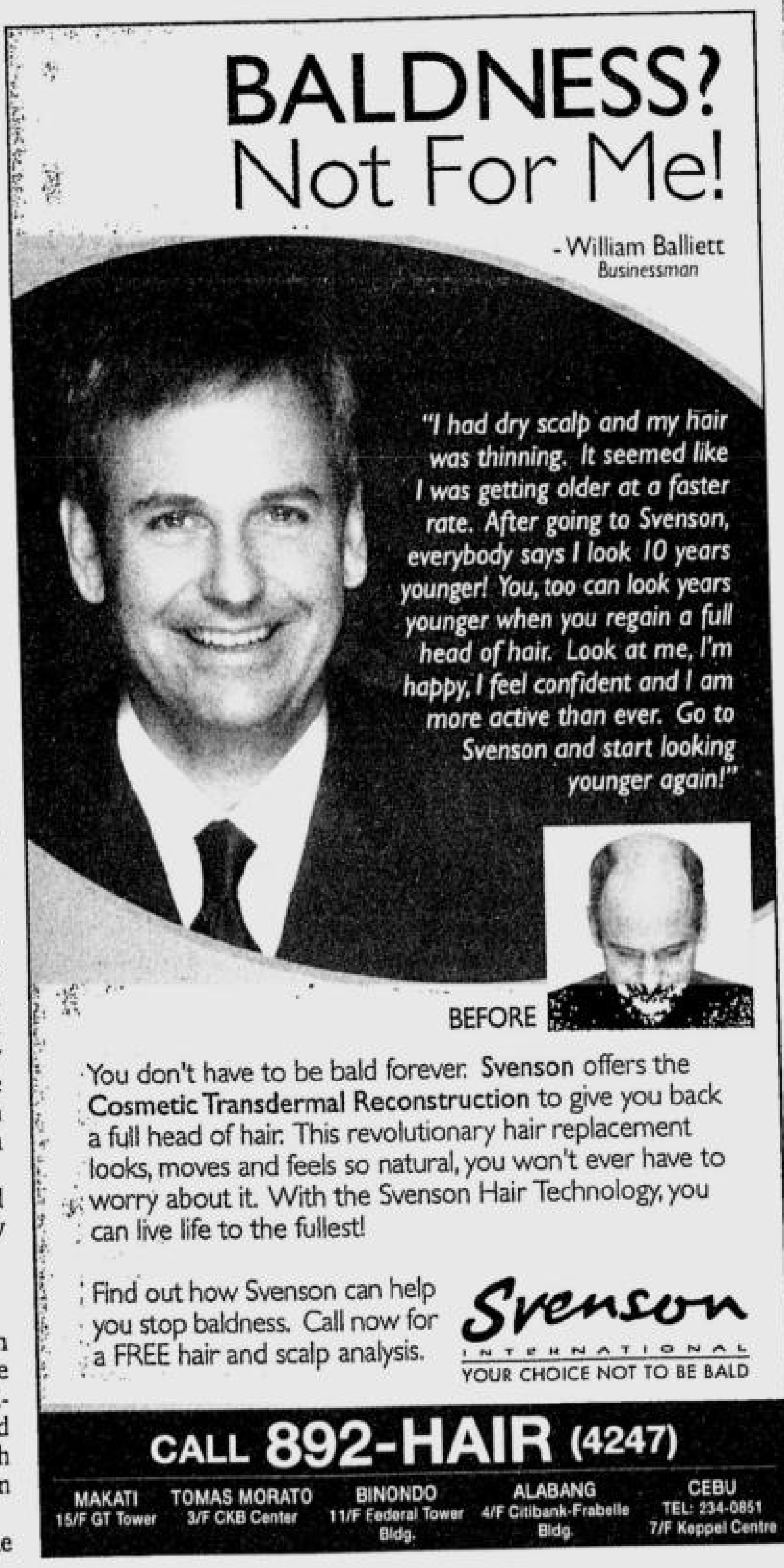
Tellers' money

The robbers then took the cash from the tellers' counters, Lipana said. Police could not yet say how much was taken, pending an audit by the bank.

But Lipana said he doubted if the amount reached P1 million, since not much cash was in the tellers' counters that day, according to bank employees.

With their loot in hand, the robbers casually walked out of the bank, boarded two motorcycles and disappeared through the busy highway, police said.

The heist took all of 10 minutes, according to Lipana.



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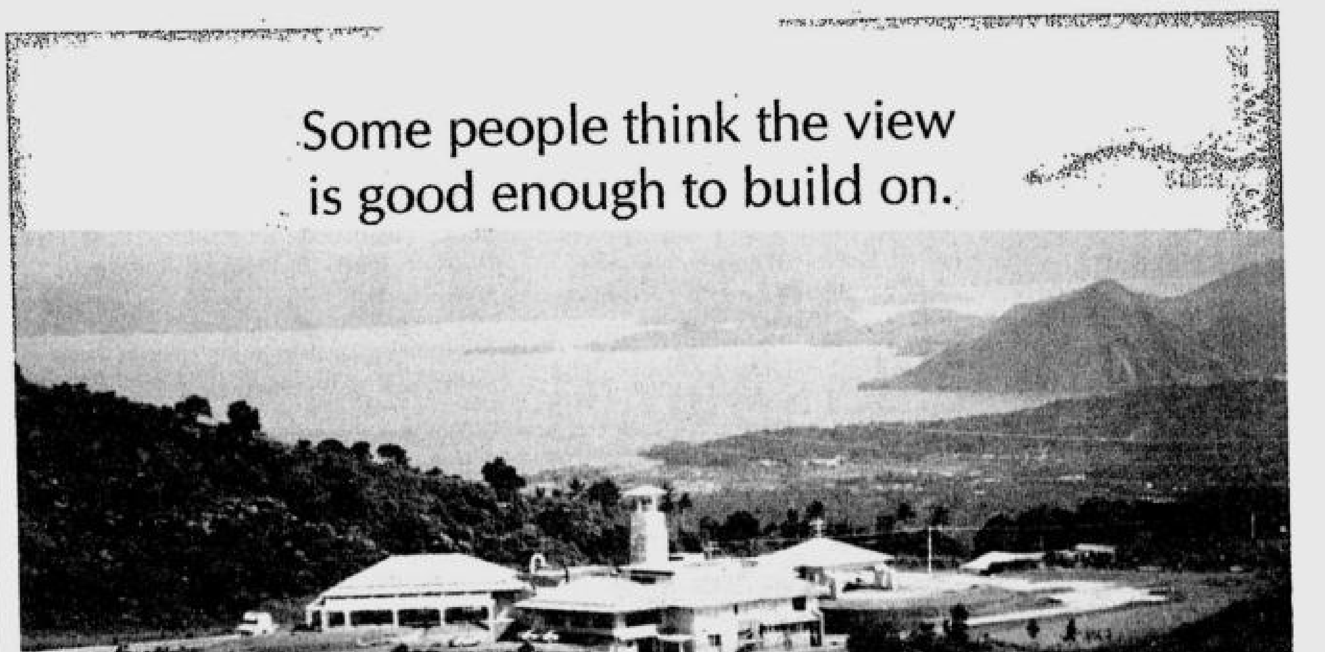

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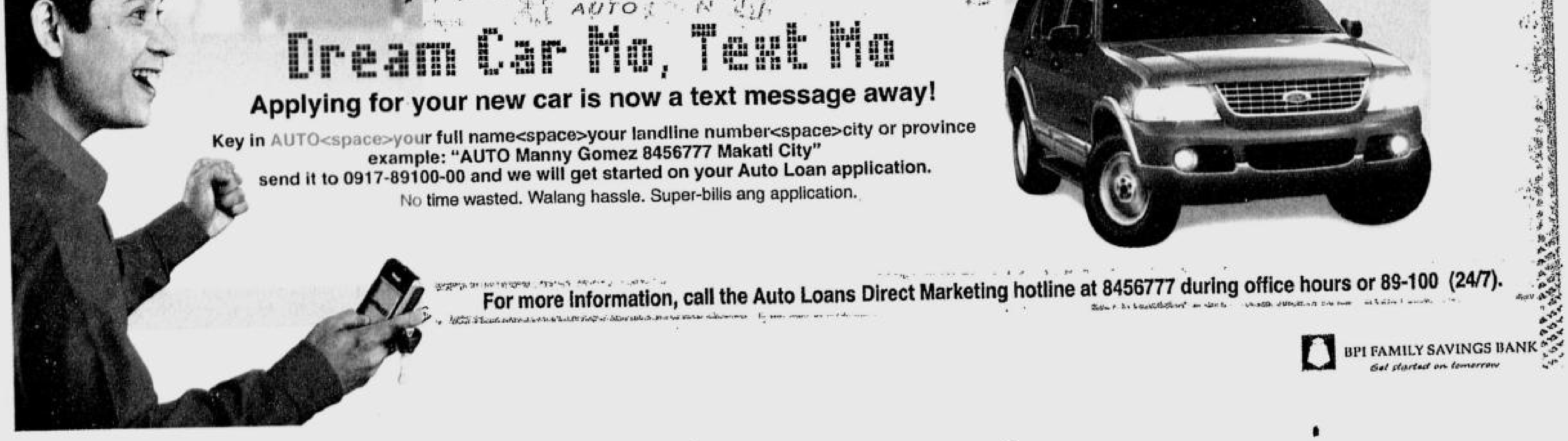

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PCGG reviewing Metrowalk lease contracts with 3 firms

By Alcuin Papa

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION on Good Government (PCGG) yesterday said it was looking into possible contract violations committed by three companies to whom the agency leased the 5,000-sq m Metrowalk property in Ortigas Center, Pasig.

PCGG Commissioner Ricardo Abcede said they are reviewing the lease contracts signed by former PCGG officials with three prominent developers to find out if the developers are allowed to sub-lease the property to other companies.

"The new commission is reviewing them (contracts) right now. If there are disadvantageous portions, we will have to correct it," he said.

Abcede said he recalled that three real estate corporations developed the Metrowalk property, located at the corner of Meralco and Ortigas Avenues.

One of the three developers, Pasig Printing Corp. (PPC), has reportedly in its board, nominees of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson. PPC began to lease the area from Mid-Pasig Land in May 2003 and developed the Metrowalk area by constructing bars and shops.

The other two lessees are West Point Industrial Sales Co. and its sister company, CW Marketing and Development Co.

"As far as I remember at that time, I understand the major lesser were told to get the consent of the PCGG before sub-leasing. What happened was that they were simply tolerated and perhaps they went on without even getting the consent of the PCGG," he added.

The Metrowalk property has been in the news lately after the killing of businessman Leonardo Umale, who won a court case involving a property whose ownership he had been contesting with Singson.

Umale was shot last Thursday in front of the Pearl Plaza Building in Pasig City. His wife, Clarissa, has accused Singson of being behind her husband's death, an allegation the governor denied.

Umale and Singson also had a run-in in 2004 over the collection of parking fees along Pearl Drive.

Mayor Vicente Eusebio of Pasig City later stepped in and declared Pearl Drive a "free parking" zone.

The new 'masters' at the piers

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

SMUGGLERS NOW BOW TO the new "masters" at the piers and the customs zone—members of the police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) assigned to apprehend smuggled cargo.

Importers with "suspected" cargo allegedly shell out P10,000 for each container being taken out of the piers or customs zone, according to my sources.

The CIDG has become a force to reckon with at the customs zone and the piers after the special unit arrested Sammy Lee, said to be the No. 1 smuggler, recently.

The CIDG (formerly Criminal Investigation Service) is the police counterpart of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

Apparently, Malacañang assigned the CIDG to go after alleged big-time smugglers, especially the siblings Vicky and Tomas Toh.

But I heard the special unit is not keen in going after alleged smugglers—the Tohs included—but in collecting protection money from them.

A CIDG officer even exonerated the Tohs when he told a reporter that there was no evidence against them. If he would only conduct an honest-to-goodness investigation, he would have gathered enough evidence to send the Toh siblings to prison for economic sabotage.

But can you blame the CIDG for stalling in going after the Tohs? Somebody big loves them.

* * *

A direct beneficiary of the renewed antismuggling campaign is an official at the customs legal service.

My customs sources say he also charges P10,000 for every container that comes out of the piers.

This guy is a member of an adhoc customs unit called RATS or Run Against The Smugglers.

Don't you think the unit is appropriately named?

* * *

Many brokers rejoice at the new turn of events at the piers and customs zone.

Slowly, their old customers have been coming back to them after Sammy Lee's arrest. Lee cornered the market since he either paid minimal duties on the imported goods he handled or didn't pay anything at all.

Nobody at customs had the guts to demand that Lee pay the right amount of taxes and duties since he was under the protection of the Tohs.

But the biggest beneficiary of the antismuggling campaign is the bureau itself.

Since the exposé in this column about the smuggling at the piers, the Tohs have disappeared from the scene.

Result: A jump in revenue collection by the Bureau of Customs.

* * *

While smugglers are on the run or are lying low at the Manila ports, those in Cebu are still having their heyday. Smuggling continues at the Cebu port, according to customs officials in Manila.

Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales has ordered Cebu port collector Lourdes Mangawang replaced by collector Grace Caringal from Manila.

Mangawang's relief was due to low collection.

But Morales' superiors at the Department of Finance have sat on his order that had the blessing of Malacañang.

I was shown a copy of an order coming from Malacañang for Mangawang to be replaced by Caringal. The order was signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

What's so special about Mangawang that even a presidential order had to be violated?

Pssst! Somebody at the DOF is enamored of the pretty, diminutive collector.

CELEBRATION TIME

Students of Bagong Silangan High School in Quezon City whoop it up after the rehearsal for their graduation rites. JOAN BONDOC

Informal settlers warned

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE PARAÑAQUE GOVERNMENT has given informal settlers in the city two options: Go back to their home provinces or move to the relocation site in Laguna.

Mayor Florencio Bernabe has announced that the houses of people living near the so-called "danger zones" like riverbanks, creeks, railroad tracks and underneath bridges, will be demolished next month.

The demolition was ordered by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority under the Development Housing Act of 1992.

Bernabe, however, promised to help the 500 families who would be affected by the demolition.

MMDA, public to go after 'habal-habal'

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday asked the public to help them go after private motorcycles being used as public transport, also known as *habal-habal*.

"Anybody who has bright ideas on ways to spot *habal-habal* operators on the road ... those who want to have their suggestions heard, they can tell us so we could go after those behind these illegal operations," MMDA Traffic Operations Center Executive Director Angelito Vergel de Dios told the INQUIRER.

He said those who have suggestions may relay them to the agency by calling 136, the MMDA hotline.

The *habal-habal* first became popular in rural areas in the Visayas and Mindanao. Late last year, the MMDA received reports about private motorcycle owners offering rides to commuters at P20 per head.

One known route of *habal-habal* operators is from the Edsa-Ayala Avenue intersection in Makati to Fort Bonifacio in Taguig.

MMDA traffic enforcers, however, have admitted that they are helpless in going after *habal-habal* operators because of the difficulty in distinguishing between private motorcycles and those for hire.

"They even have spare helmets for their riders, as if they were legal. I think nobody would testify against the operators because they also benefit from the *habal-habal*. They could avoid traffic if they ride on those motorcycles," Vergel de Dios said.

He added that the agency has been limited to conducting surveillance on reported terminals for these illegal public transport.

"The only way I could think of is to try to shake up their operations by deploying traffic enforcers in known terminals. That would maybe force them to transfer (to another area to avoid) our enforcers," Vergel de Dios said.

The MMDA also expressed hope that this tactic would lead to fewer people taking the *habal-habal* because if the operators keep on transferring to other teminals, their passengers would not know where to find them.

"It will reach a point that it will no longer be profitable, because they would be forced to transfer and transfer," said Vergel de Dios.

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Body found near drug dens

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

POLICE YESTERDAY FOUND THE BODY OF A man who had been stabbed more than 10 times in the chest, just meters away from a compound where antidrug operatives raided a compound of shabu dens last month.

The body of the man was covered with a cardboard which bore the message: "Ganito Ang Sasapitin Lahat Ng Pusher Dito Sa Pasig–Vigilante" (This is what will happen to all pushers in Pasig).

The body was discovered at about 6:20 a.m. on a vacant lot on F. Soriano Street in Barangay Sto. Tomas, where the national police raided more than 40 shanties being used as drug dens last month.

SPO2 Roberto Garcia told the INQUIRER that the man, between 26-27 years old, was wearing a pair of black pants and shirt.

Neighbors knew him as "Idol" but they had no idea what his full name was.

"The man could have been killed elsewhere and was just dumped here," Garcia said, quoting witnesses who said they saw a white car pass by the area before they discovered the victim, whom the police said could have been dead for six hours.

Neighbors said the victim used to sell fried bananas in a nearby public market. There were also unconfirmed reports that he was forced inside a white car two days ago.

Suspected shabu runner

Garcia said they were also confirming reports that the victim used to be a "runner of shabu" in the area.

But he could not confirm if the killing was really perpetrated by a vigilante group preying on suspected drug pushers.

"This is the first time (we came across a claim like this)," Garcia said.

"We will still look at other possible motives," he added, saying it was also possible the killers could have just written the message to confuse investigators.

'Starstruck' finalist mauled

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A "STARSTRUCK" FINALIST WAS MAULED by a gang after attending a relative's wake before dawn yesterday in Pasay City.

Alvin Aragon, 16, was walking along Muñoz Street in Dominga at around 2 a.m. when 10 men, led by a certain Jordan Garcia, allegedly blocked his path and beat him up, police said.

The suspects escaped after Aragon fainted. The victim, who sustained bruises on his face and body, was brought to the Pasay City General Hospital for a medico-legal examination.

Policemen from the Buendia Avenue substation scoured the neighborhood for Garcia after Aragon sought their assistance. But they were not able to locate the suspect.

According to Police Community Precinct 2 desk officer SP04 Susan Mercado, they advised Aragon to report the incident to the Women's and Children's Desk at the Pasay police headquarters.

Aragon was a finalist of GMA 7's reality-based talent search, "Starstruck," in 2003 and is now one of the hosts of the Sunday noontime show "SOP."

METROBRIEFS

Rob suspect arrested

POLICE arrested one of three suspects who robbed a factory worker while she was walking along MacArthur Highway in Potrero, Malabon at dawn yesterday. Luisa Aquino told PO2 Benjamin Megio that she was on her way home when three men took her bag at gunpoint. Aquino said she followed the suspects until they entered a house and then called the police. When the police arrived, they barged into the house on Pineapple Street in Malabon and arrested Angelito Zulueta. The two other suspects, however, escaped.

Nancy C. Carvajal

1st Manila Red Cross marathon on March 26

IN LINE with the Red Cross Manila chapter's 59th anniversary celebration, a marathon will be held on Sunday, March 26, at the Rajah Sulayman on Roxas Boulevard, Manila. Those interested can participate in the 3, 5 and 10-kilometer run after paying the registration fee. The money raised through the marathon will be used in funding the chapter's various humanitarian services. For more information, please call Marj or Aicel at 5273595 or 5272161.

Saan Pupulutin Ang Pilipinas Kung Wala Nang Industriya?

Regulate the Exodus of Skills and Talents!

Keep the Best and the Brightest at Home!

Overseas employment, the nation's economic lifeline, is turning into its gravedigger.

While the remittances of over 5 million Filipino migrant workers and over 3 million Filipino immigrants directly support the needs of one-fourth of the population, the unchecked and unregulated outflow of skills and talents is threatening to decimate the few but vital industries that we still have. Ironically, the main justification for the 'temporary policy' of manpower export dating back to the Marcos regime is that this is a 'stop-gap' transition measure 'needed' while waiting for the IMF-WB agro-industrial policies to bear fruit. ***Sa halip, nagbagsakan isa-isa ang negosyo, saka at trabaho nitong nakaraang tatlong dekada, at ang manpower export ay naging 'permanently temporary'!***

Today, almost everyone is leaving the country – from entertainers and domestic helps, to those with engineering and managerial talents. This is the easy way for the government to generate its target of one million jobs, as unemployment and poverty continue to swell given the continuous erosion of the country's agro-industrial base.

And now, a great national tragedy is shaping up as even the basic industries that we still have are collapsing with the massive foreign poaching of the skilled and professional personnel who keep these industries humming. Even the delivery of basic social services such as health and education is being threatened.

Can our hospitals treat patients without doctors and nurses or can learning take place without teachers? Can our planes fly without pilots, aircraft mechanics and air comptrollers? Can wireless text messaging and communication happen without radio frequency engineers? Can electricity reach our homes without the linemen? Can ships sail without any guidance from the first mates? Can our steel, petrochemical and other remaining factories operate without any plant engineers?

The depletion of mission-critical skills has never been so severe as it is. In the health sector alone, over 100 hospitals have closed down and the ratio of nurses-to-patients in many hospitals is at an alarming and unsustainable 1:60.

But the most serious situation is in the aviation industry. From ATO's list of 3,548 commercial pilots, only 700 have remained with the local aviation industry. The number of aviation mechanics still in the country is down to 1,500, from a previous high of 14,684. ATO's own personnel complement of 2000 has been reduced by foreign poaching to only 700. Weekly, poachers from Singapore, China, India, Middle East, North America and other countries, without clearance from the POEA, are enticing our pilots and aircraft mechanics with all kinds of incentives, some imaginary, in order to abandon the local aviation industry – without resignation notices, without waiting for replacements, and without giving the industry time to recover its investments on training and experiential learning (amounting to at least P1 million a year per pilot and close to half a million a year for an aviation mechanic).

Can an archipelagic Philippines afford to lose its aviation industry? Should the country wait — passively and helplessly — for the total collapse of the health sector, education sector, telecommunications sector, domestic shipping industry, petrochemical industry, steel industry, power industry, accountancy and other critical industries?

We, in the Fair Trade Alliance (FTA) say NO.

While we welcome POEA's recent move to require six-month's notice for mission-critical personnel and professionals, this is not enough. The crisis is not a normal, transient phenomenon. There are grave social, economic and national security implications which demand bolder policy responses. We demand the following:*

Stricter regulation of the outflow of critical skills and talents in crucial and strategic industries. Sections 5 and 31 of the Migrant Workers Act of 1995 empower the State to suspend or ban the deployment of migrant workers 'in pursuit of national interest or when public welfare so requires' and 'to secure' the services of 'professionals and other highly-skilled Filipinos' the government should:

- Develop and disseminate to recruitment agencies, overseas diplomatic posts the BID, in consultation with affected industries, a list of endangered mission-critical personnel and professionals;
- Suspend the processing of passport and travel documents of mission-critical personnel and professionals in such endangered industries;
- De-list and suspend the licenses of recruitment agencies which persist in poaching, recruiting and deploying mission-critical personnel and professionals despite the POEA advisory listing; and

Relatedly, the government should pass a National Service Act requiring the mission-critical personnel and professionals to render a minimum number of years as national service in the home country calculated on the basis of the investment on the education and training made by the school system and industry as determined by an appropriate authority created for this purpose.

On the other hand, the government should immediately upgrade the salaries of mission-critical personnel in the public service such as nurses in government hospitals, teachers in public schools and air controllers; at the same time, it should call for industry-government consultation on how industry can provide globally-competitive compensation and working conditions to keep the best and the brightest at home.

Finally, government, industry, labor and other concerned sectors should come together to develop an integrated human resource development program simultaneous to or accompanying the development of a reinvigorated and integrated agro-industrial development program for the country. The permanently 'temporary' policy of labor migration should be reviewed, and so is the failure of the existing agro-industrial policies as formulated by the IMF-WB group and as implemented by a succession of economic technocrats, from the Marcos regime to the present Administration.

*** From the resolutions of participants (industry, labor, academe and civil society) in the Forum-Dialogue on the 'Exodus of Mission-Critical Personnel and Professionals': Saan Tayo Tutungo' organized by the Fair Trade Alliance and the UP School of Labor and Industrial Relations, held at Diliman, Quezon City, March 4, 2006.**

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

French PM blinks, may amend youth jobs law

PARIS—FRENCH PRIME MINISTER DOMINIQUE DE Villepin tempered his refusal to bow to protests against a controversial youth employment contract by saying on Tuesday there was flexibility in a key element of the plan.

In the latest protests against the First Job Contract (CPE) law around 40,000 students marched through Paris or held other forms of action around the country and there were fresh clashes with security forces, police said.

Villepin's government is under massive pressure to withdraw a law that allows employers to fire people under 26 without giving a reason at any time during a two-year trial period and while he stood by the law he said there could be flexibility.

"There are three things to do with this law which are impossible—first is (its) withdrawal, because that would be like saying that we are giving in to the logic of ultimatums and preconditions," Villepin said in the text of a speech to ruling party deputies.

But he added: "Social partners have the complete freedom to reduce this (trial) period in those sectors where it would be most relevant." The prime minister, battered in the polls and facing a stern test of his ambition to contest 2007 presidential elections, has repeatedly called for unions and employers to work with him on how best to implement—not abandon—the measure.

The government says the CPE will create jobs. Opponents, who brought up to 1.5 million people onto the streets in marches across France at the weekend, say it will create a generation of disposable young workers with no security.

France's large public sector is expected to join a one-day work stoppage next Tuesday called by unions and student groups.

"This law will take us back a whole century in terms of social rights," said Fabien Duquosne, 19, a student who joined university students and high school pupils in the Paris march.

Some students wore red masks as a sign of solidarity. One marched with a hangman's scaffold whose noose was formed out of the letters CPE. Another student's T-shirt read: "Existence Resistance."

The march was peaceful but police said they arrested 37 people and three officers were lightly wounded during clashes that followed. Some 5,000 people marched in Paris, they said.

One student body put the figure at up to 15,000.

One union member was in a coma in a Paris hospital on Tuesday from injuries received during violence that followed Saturday's demonstration. His union demanded an investigation.

The Paris public prosecutors' office told journalists there was no indication so far of police error.

Some lawmakers from the ruling conservative Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) say they fear the crisis could cost the Right presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007.

Gently prodded by his mentor President Jacques Chirac, Villepin has redoubled efforts to talk to students, employers and the unemployed. *Reuters*

BANANA SPLIT

Banana trees destroyed by Cyclone Larry lie on the ground near Babinda, about 80 km south of Cairns in Northern Queensland, on March 22. REUTERS

Bush admits Iraq war eroding his presidency

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT George W. Bush said Tuesday that the war in Iraq was eroding his political capital, his starkest admission yet about the costs of the conflict to his presidency, and suggested that American forces would remain in the country until at least 2009.

In a quick remark at a White House news conference about the reserves of political strength he earned in his 2004 reelection victory—"I'd say I'm spending that capital on the war"—Bush in effect acknowledged that until he could convince increasingly skeptical Americans that the United States was winning the war, Iraq would overshadow everything he does.

Later, in response to a question about whether a day would come when there would be no more American forces in Iraq, he said that "future presidents and future governments of Iraq" would make that decision.

That statement was one of the few he has made that provides insight into his thinking about the duration of the American commitment in Iraq, and signaled that any withdrawal of troops would extend beyond his term in office.

Bush asserted that Iraq was not in a civil war, and took issue with Ayad Allawi, a former Iraqi prime minister and White House ally, who said Sunday that it was. The president also said repeatedly that he was convinced that the United States would succeed in Iraq and that he would continue to deliver that message across the country.

"I'm going to say it again, if I didn't believe we could succeed, I wouldn't be there," he said at the nearly hour-long session in the White House press briefing room. "I wouldn't put those kids there."

Bush's mood at the news conference alternated between relaxed and testy, although he appeared to be trying hard not to show his irritation at some reporters. In one exchange, Helen Thomas, the longtime White House correspondent and Hearst newspaper columnist, asked Bush why he really wanted to go to war with Iraq. He curtly replied that "to assume I wanted war is just flat wrong, Helen, in all due respect." *New York Times News Service*

Russia wants UN briefing on Milosevic death in jail

UNITED NATIONS—RUSSIA WANTS A UN briefing on conditions in UN jails following the recent deaths of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and Croatian Serb Milan Babic, its envoy said on Tuesday.

Russian diplomat Konstantin Dolgov also asked a closed-door UN Security Council meeting for information from UN officials on the state of an investigation into the death of Milosevic and Babic by a UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands. "We want a briefing on the internal investigation going on hopefully in The Hague in connection with the latest incidents which happened there and the condition in which the inmates are kept," Dolgov told Reuters.

"The news we have received from The Hague has been disturbing. So we just want to receive information which the UN secretariat could possibly give us," he said.

Dolgov was supported by China and Qatar, but Britain and France said they would need instructions from their governments, diplomats at the meeting said.

The 15-member council meets on the issue again on Thursday and the envoys said it was likely the council would request such a briefing from the UN secretariat in New York.

Milosevic's family has accused the UN war crimes tribunal of murdering the former Serb strongman by refusing his request to travel to Russia for medical treatment.

A Russian doctor who later examined the autopsy agreed with the conclusion of Dutch physicians that he had died of a heart attack but also said treatment in Moscow could have saved him. *Reuters*

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UN fails to reach accord on Iran nuke crisis

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN SECURITY Council failed to reach an accord on Tuesday on how to respond to Iran's nuclear programs even as President George W. Bush warned Tehran could blackmail the world if it had the bomb.

Russia, backed by China, wants to delete large sections of a Franco-British draft statement the Security Council has been studying for nearly two weeks as a first reaction to Iran's nuclear research, which the West believes is a cover for bomb making.

Russia is concerned about how deeply the 15-member Council, which has the power to impose sanctions, should get involved in the Iranian crisis. Until now it has been handled by the 35-member board of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog in Vienna, and negotiators Germany, Britain and France.

Bush, who has offered to talk to Iran on what he sees as Tehran's meddling in Iraq, made clear that does not include the nuclear issue. Those talks would be led by the three European Union powers.

"Our negotiations with Iran on the nuclear weapons will be led by the EU-3," Bush said. "And that's important because the Iranians must hear there's a unified voice." "If the Iranians were to have a nuclear weapon they could blackmail the world" because "they're not heading toward the international accords, they're not welcoming the international inspections...," Bush added. *Reuters*

N. Korea threatens preemptive strike

SEOUL—NORTH KOREA SAID IT WAS PREpared to launch a preemptive military strike and it would not bow to US pressure to give up its nuclear weapons, its official media said in separate reports on Tuesday.

The North Korean comments, which the United States called inflammatory, come as six-party nuclear talks on ending Pyongyang's pursuit of nuclear weapons hit a snag over a US crackdown on firms suspected of aiding the North in illicit activities such as counterfeiting and drug trafficking.

In recent days, North Korea has also expressed anger at annual joint US-South Korean military drills. Pyongyang sees them as a prelude to an invasion and nuclear attack. It threatened that its Korean People's Army has the right to strike first, if needed.

"The KPA, too, has (the) option for pre-emptive attack in most effective and positive defense of itself," the North's official KCNA news agency reported on Tuesday.

North Korea made a similar threat last week. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Iraq rebels kill 18 in assault

MUQDADIYA, Iraq—Hundreds of rebels stormed an Iraqi police station Tuesday in a predawn raid to free inmates, triggering the deadliest firefight this year, which left 18 police and 10 insurgents dead. The Consultative Council of Mujahedeen, an umbrella insurgent grouping led by the al-Qaida terror group, claimed responsibility. Army and police commandos were rushed to the town of Muqdadiya northeast of Baghdad to hunt down the large rebel force and recapture the 32 prisoners they freed. Officials said at least 18 policemen and guards were killed, along with 10 rebels, in the raid on a compound housing the town's main police station, courthouse and municipal offices. *AFP*

Emergency in Ecuador

QUITO, Ecuador—Ecuador declared a state of emergency in five central provinces on Tuesday to try to control renewed protests by thousands of Indians demanding the government quit US free-trade talks this week. Interior Minister Felipe Vega announced the measure after Indian peasants intensified blockades on key roads in at least eight highland regions in protests that have cost Ecuador millions in lost commerce since they began last week. The state of emergency forbids public gatherings and marches and sets curfews. Troops earlier this week reinforced security along major highways leading into the capital. *Reuters*

More protests in Belarus

MINSK—Demonstrators protesting the reelection of hardline Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko vowed Wednesday to stay put in the city centre until a major rally planned for the weekend, in what has become the biggest challenge to the authoritarian Moscow-backed regime. Opposition leader Alexander Milinkevich called for a massive pro-democracy rally Saturday, celebrated by regime opponents as Freedom Day in Belarus. "We will meet every day until the 25th. This is a very important meeting. Tell your family and friends to come," Milinkevich told a crowd of around 3,000 protestors rallying in Oktyabrskaya Square for a third day on Tuesday. *AFP*

US dog handler found guilty

WASHINGTON—A court martial on Tuesday found a US soldier guilty of assaulting and maltreating detainees with his guard dog at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. Sergeant Michael Smith was also found guilty of dereliction of duty and conspiracy to mistreat prisoners and could now face a jail term of up to eight years and nine months as well as a dishonorable discharge. Smith, 24 was accused of using his Belgian shepherd dog to threaten prisoners in January 2004 at the Baghdad jail. Prosecutors said he set the dog on prisoners for his own amusement. *AFP*

SPORTS

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Editor **Teddyvic S. Melendres**

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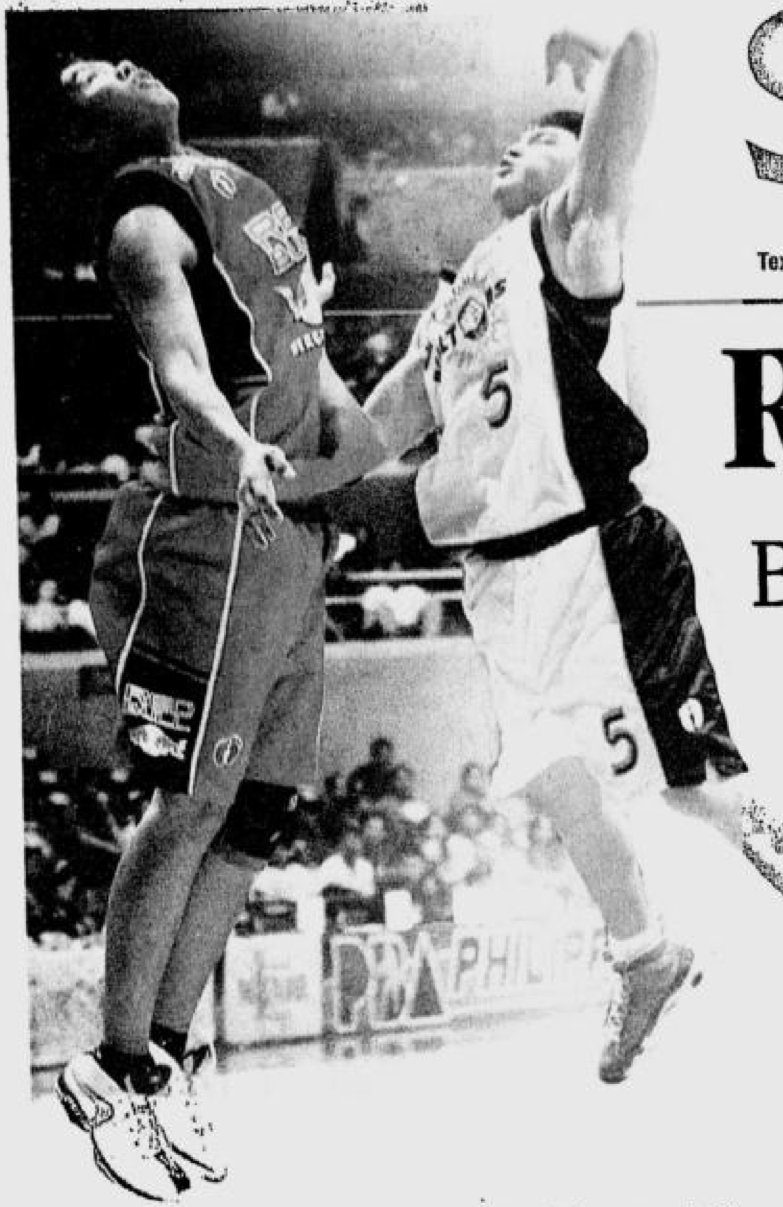

RED BULL'S Leo Najorda and Sta. Lucia's Alex Cabagnot make like a dancing pair as they soar for a rebound. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Red Bull rips Sta. Lucia

Bulls splurge at finish as Realtors sputter

By June Navarro

RED BULL HELD STA. LUCIA Realty without a field goal in the last five minutes to escape with a 104-90 victory last night in the Gran Matador Brandy-PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

Mick Pennisi nailed a three-pointer after sinking two free throws to doom the Realtors and seal the Bulls' second straight win after an initial loss.

"There's nothing new in our style. We just kept on pressing and rotating the players," said Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao. "I only asked the guys to pour it all for six to seven minutes and sustain their energy on the floor."

Struggling from the field, the Realtors went 0 of 14 in the last five minutes and 37 seconds in the face of the smothering full-court pressure by the Bulls.

Guiao noted that the absence of Sta. Lucia gunner Kenneth Duremdes and the breakout game of rookie Paolo Bugia helped their cause.

Duremdes figured in a freak accident against Air21, spraining his right ankle after hitting the rolling advertisement machine.

"We're lucky, Kenneth wasn't able to play. If Kenneth had played, he could have given Sta. Lucia another dimension with his style of play," said Guiao.

Bugia banged in a career-high 15 points, all in the first two quarters.

In the second game, Purefoods held Ginebra to a second straight season-low for a 73-56 victory. The Kings were held to just 59 points in their last game and couldn't seem to get any offense going to drop to 2-2 in a tie with the Giants, the San Miguel Beermen and the Alaska Aces.

GAMES TOMORROW
(*Cuneta Astrodome*)
4:40 p.m.—Alaska vs Talk 'N Text
7:35 p.m.—Ginebra vs Air21

The scores:

First Game

RED BULL 104—Bugia 15, Vilanueva 15, Pennisi 15, Robinson 12, Baguio 10, Cruz 9, Tugade 8, Valenzuela 7, Fonacier 6, Alvarez 5, Najorda 2.

STA. LUCIA 90—Tolomia 24, Omolon 18, Espino 17, Cabagnot 14, Aquino 11, Demape 3, Calimag 2, Gonzales 1, Catli 0, Agapito 0, Mendoza 0.

Quarters: 28-31, 51-46, 72-77, 104-90.

Second Game

PUREFOODS 73—Tejada 16, Artadi 14, Yap 14, Pingris 12, Raymundo 11, Limpot 2, Yap 2, Castillo 2, Gamboa 0, Yee 0.

GINEBRA 56—Helterbrand 13, Caguioa 9, Sotto 7, Santos 6, Macapagal 5, Holper 4, Ferreria 4, Menk 4, Dimaunahan 2, Adducul 2, Ramos 0.

Quarters: 21-8, 31-22, 55-37, 73-56

Torion returns home to rebuild a broken dream

By Calvin Cordova
Cebu Daily News

CEBU CITY—NINE YEARS AGO, A spunky, gritty playmaker seeing action for Western Union caught the fancy of a Red Bull squad campaigning in the inaugural PBL Vis-Min Cup.

Red Bull coaching staff drooled over the 5-foot-8 point guard so much that it wasted no time signing him up, plucking him out of the Cebu playgrounds and throwing him into the glare of national basketball limelight.

Jimwell Torion then went on and took the country by storm.

Nearly a decade since leaving home for the glitter of big-time hoops, Torion is back here after Red Bull decided not to renew his contract at the start of the PBA Philippine Cup.

Though scarred by the blows his reputation has taken, the Argao native is ready to rebuild his career here, where it all started.

"I started my basketball career here in Cebu and now I'm back," Torion told the Cebu Daily News in his native dialect. "I hope I can still give entertainment to the Cebuanos."

Signed by the then amateur Red Bull squad in 1997, the quicksilver cager's first stint with the team was during the Jones Cup in Taiwan that year. While walking through a night market with journalists, Torion saw a blinking pair of Nike shoes which he immediately purchased. The following night, he had the game of his life, towing Red Bull past a Korean squad.

The Salazar Institute of Technology product then went on to star for the Photokina franchise in the PBL, before he was elevated directly to the pro ranks along with other crack Red Bull teammates.

Once in the PBA, Torion showed what he was truly made of—including his dark side.

With his fancy moves and devil-may-care attitude, Torion established himself as a premier point guard, highlighting his new role by winning the 2002 Commissioner's Cup Finals MVP.

But when the league cracked the anti-drug whip late in 2003, it was his back that drew the most lashes, earning a suspension few thought he could come back from.

TORION/A24

TORION: It all began in Cebu.

(Before running this ad, the editor had to check if there were any typographical errors.)

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SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I GUESS, BARRING AN UNFORESEEN event, the elections are on tomorrow.

No, it's not a presidential snap election I'm talking about here, although that'd be most certainly welcome if it happens at all. GMA badly needs a break, don't you think so, fellas?

But the election I'm referring to is something that is nonetheless of equal import, too, since the future of a major player in Philippine sports is being thrust into the microscope with tomorrow's exercise of suffrage.

There's too much at stake here, one of which is the very foundation of the one holding the election.

And unless a coup or something that paralyzes society happens tomorrow, I see no reason why the National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP) should not push through with its planned election of a new set of officers.

All is in place for the polls to be held at the Villamor clubhouse.

The NGAP has been in the spotlight a lot of times already the past several years, most notable of which is its incessant frenetic campaign to restore order among its ranks. It is no secret that a lot of factions have been trying to undermine the association's leadership for one reason or another. But thankfully, they've all failed mainly because each oppositionist has an agenda of his own. When plans are accompanied by hidden motives, they are bound to fail.

It is easy to criticize, especially if one is driven by envy and, sadly, the NGAP has had its share of criticisms from virtually all flanks. But mostly, the NGAP critics fell one after the other by the wayside because they merely hurled mud and their accusations were virtually all unfounded. In the end, the NGAP weathered them all because the leadership—from Ed Ermita to Rod Feliciano all the way to Benny Gopez—had stood on solid grounds of dignity, transparency and integrity. Ermita scored the spectacular victory of having the World Team Championships staged here in 1996, Feliciano nurtured a Philippine Team that placed second in the World Team Championships in 2002, and Gopez secured a rare gold—gold finish in men's individual and men's team in the recent 2005 SEA Games, among other achievements too many to mention here under his one-term stint.

The elections today will see all 13 candidates win since the NGAP board consists of 13 officers. Not seeking re-election are incumbent president, Benny Gopez, and secretary-general, Louie Fernandez.

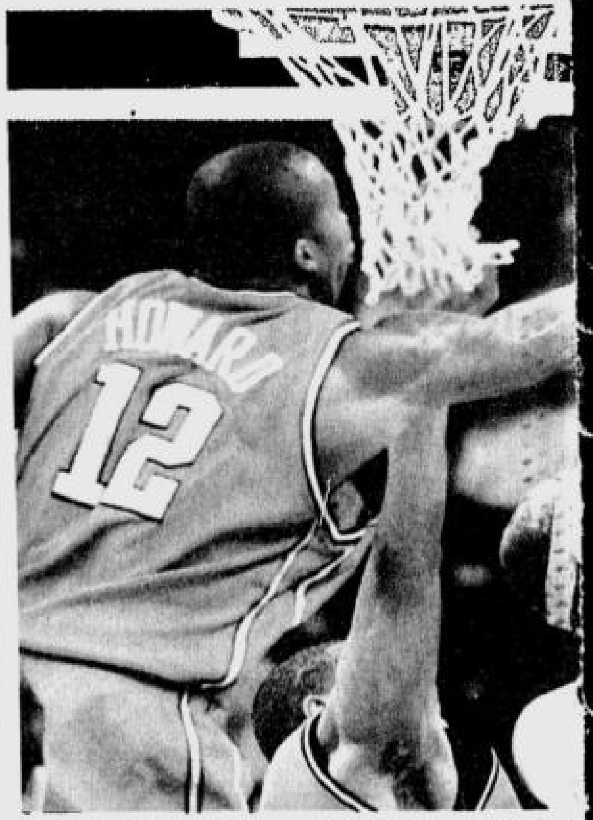
It is much ballyhooed that Transportation Secretary Larry Mendoza (he's not a relative, although we call each other "Primo") will be elected president when the board elects the NGAP officers after tomorrow's polls. My Primo will carry with him into the position tons of experience in administration, not to mention that his DOTC turf is the largest line department in the government machinery.

To my Primo I give my consent. I trust that he repose the same dignity and unsullied reputation that his predecessors had bequeathed unto the NGAP through the years.

Of course, there was no need to say that. Knowing my Primo, the NGAP is, again, in good hands.

***

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net



ORLANDO's Dwight Howard blocks Charlotte's Ju

Open DHL Am Mar. 28

THE CHASE IS WIDE open for the men's and women's crowns of the DHL-WWWExpress National Amateur Golf Championships starting March 28 at Cangolf's North course.

Defending men's champion Juvic Pagunsan has turned pro while last year's women's winner Jayvie Marie Agojo is skipping the event because of pressing academic commitments at Pepperdine where she is a golf scholar.

Jay Bayron and former winner Jun Bernis and the other members of the Philippine pool who call this wind-swept course home are slightly favored, over jungolf ace Tonlits Asistio, Marvin Dumandan and former Singapore Amateur champion Michael Bibat.

Debbie De Villa shoots for a second straight title in women's play after winning the RP Ladies in upset fashion in January at the Manila Golf Club. The 15-year-old, though, will battle a slew of veterans and jungolfers from Anya Tanpinco and Lora Roberto to chubby Mia Piccio.

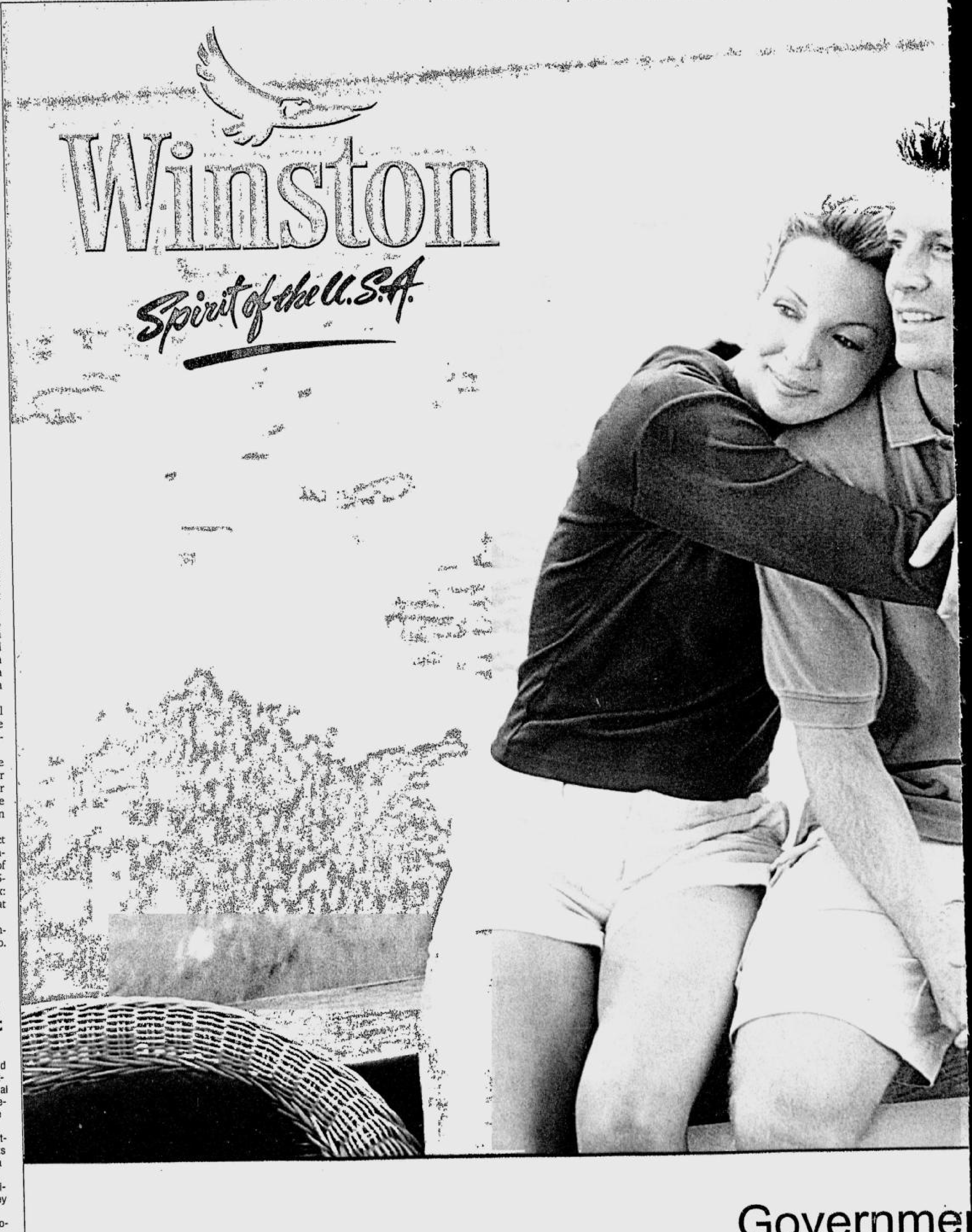
Registration is still ongoing with the deadline set on Saturday at 12 noon.

Entry fees are pegged at P2,500 for men and P2,000 for ladies, inclusive of one practice round on Monday.

For details, contact the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines at 525-6987; 524-5160, fax: 521-1587 or email at ngapgolf@hotmail.com; or at Cangolf with telefax: no. (049) 549-1363.

Espinola tops squash tournament

ONE OF THE RISING stars in local squash, Ricky Espinola, scored a big surprise by beating many-time national champion Edgar Ballebe r in the finals of the Milo-SRAP tournament's first leg recently at the Makati Sports Club courts. Espinola triumphed 10-8, 3-9, 9-0, 9-5 to rule the Division 1 of the tourney organized by the Squash Rackets Association of the Philippines and sponsored by Milo. Robert Garcia finished third by subduing Arnel Begornia, 9-8, 3-9, 9-6, 9-1. Edmar Carilio ruled Division 2, crushing PJ Austria 9-1, 9-5, 9-6, in the finals. Joey Mabilangan came in third.



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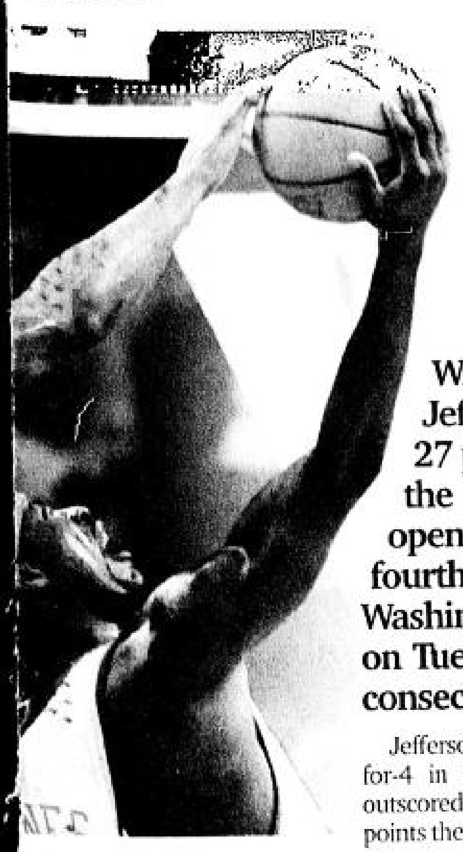
Nets, Mavs bring down foes

Hornets give Katrina-hit New Orleans reason to smile



aine Jones. AP

WASHINGTON—RICHARD Jefferson scored 21 of his 27 points after halftime, and the New Jersey Nets broke open a tight game in the fourth quarter, beating the Washington Wizards 112-100 on Tuesday night for their sixth consecutive victory.

Jefferson shot 11-for-15 overall, including 4-for-4 in the final period when New Jersey outscored Washington 41-30. That's the most points the Wizards have allowed in a quarter this season.

Vince Carter scored 28 points—topping 20 for the 11th game in a row—while Jason Kidd had 14 points, nine assists and seven rebounds in his matchup with Washington's All-Star point guard, Gilbert Arenas. Over their careers, Kidd usually gets the better of their individual matchups, but Arenas held his own Tuesday, finishing with 25 points and eight assists before fouling out.

Caron Butler also scored 25 for the Wizards, and Antawn Jamison had 16 points and 13 rebounds.

In Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored 28 points and the Mavericks harassed Houston's Yao Ming into his worst game in a month and cruised to an 88-72 victory over the Rockets.

Dallas won for the fourth time in five games to remain a half-game behind San Antonio for the best record in the Western Conference.

Yao finished with 13 points and 13 rebounds for Houston. It was his fewest points in 15 games, since scoring only six in 9 minutes against Phoenix on Feb. 16.

Jerry Stackhouse had 16 points and five assists for the Mavericks, and Jason Terry scored 12.

In New Orleans, Rasual Butler made seven 3-pointers and scored a career-high 32 points to lead the Hornets to their first victory in New Orleans in more than a year, a 120-108 rout of the LA Clippers.

The Hornets made 12 3-pointers in all, the last at the final buzzer when Butler heaved the ball at the hoop in celebration and it went in. New Orleans also snapped an eight-game losing streak.

New Orleans fans, taking in only the third and final Hornets game in New Orleans this season because of Hurricane Katrina, were exuberant throughout in seeing their first pro sports victory in over a year. They offered a prolonged, standing ovation as the game ended.

Corey Maggette scored 25 for the Clippers.

In Salt Lake City, Andrei Kirilenko had 22 points, a career-high 18 rebounds and blocked four shots in the second half as the Utah Jazz surprised the Phoenix Suns, 107-99. Deron Williams finished with 17 points and 11 assists for the Jazz, who rallied from a 15-point deficit to avoid a season sweep by the Suns.

Steve Nash had 20 points and 10 assists to lead the Suns. *AP*

COMPLETE NBA RESULTS: Grizzlies 105, Pacers 75; Raptors 114, Knicks 109; Bobcats 108, Magic 102; Timberwolves 100, Heat 96; Kings 105, Sonics 96; Spurs 107, Warriors 96

TUASON

Tuason quits as karting chief

JP TUASON HAS REsigned as president and board member of the Philippine International Karting Association.

After two and a half years of leading Pika, Tuason said he is leaving the association because "the direction where the sport is going and the principles that I have held dear are no longer aligned."

Tuason also decried the power struggle regarding the sport's governing age and class regulations which resulted in threats to his life and his family.

Tuason, who announced his resignation in a letter to Pika members recently, stressed that "the Pika board has been committed to the growth, safety and fair play of the sport and tried to keep the opportunity open to all potential Filipino champions and to provide them with a worthy training ground to be world-class drivers."

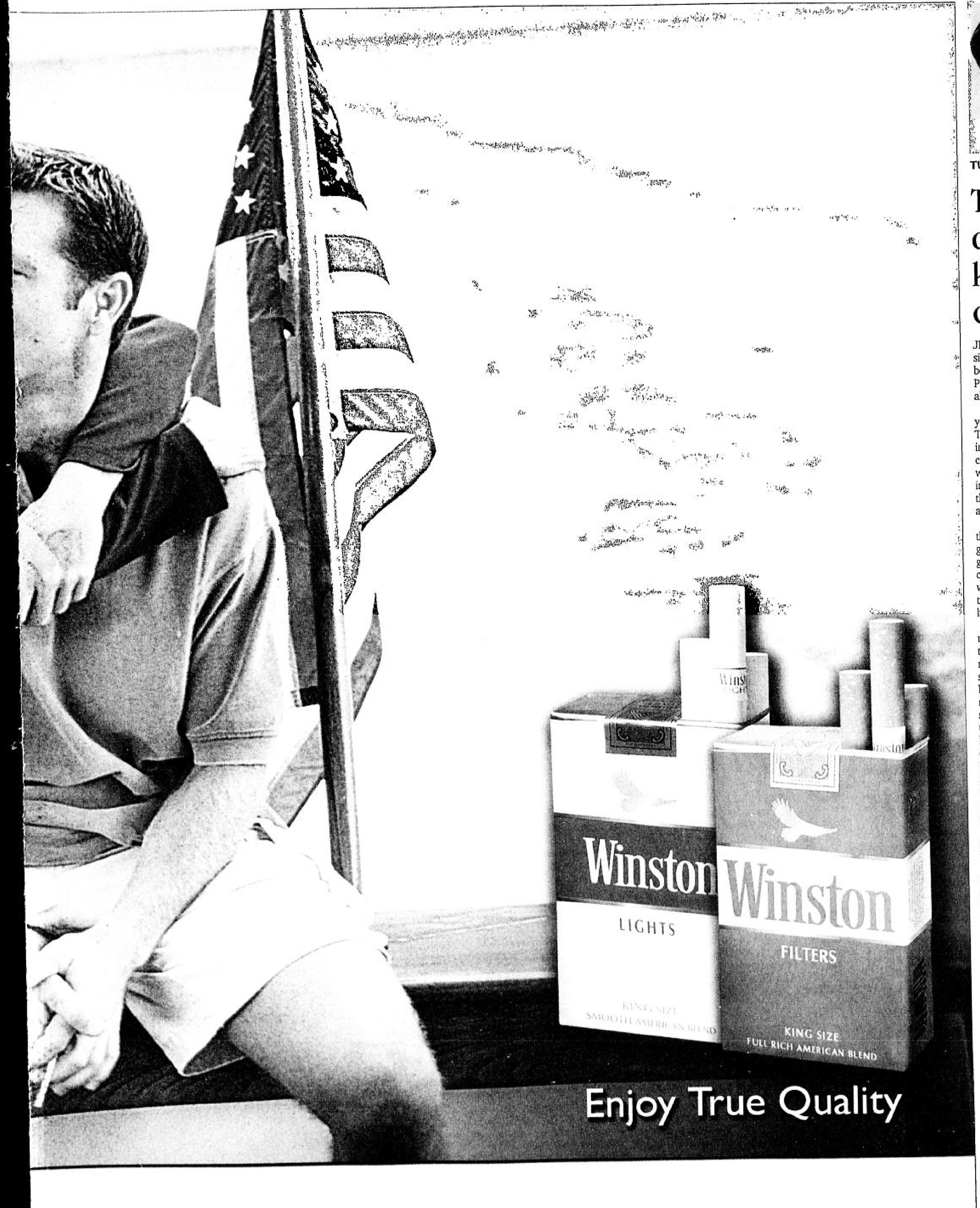
He said recent circumstances have ruined these goals.

Tuason will remain in the sport, however, as coach of his TRS-Tonykart Philippine Racing team.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Cognac Monnet (3), Ops (4), Honour N Fame (6), Big Spender (2)
Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Strong Will (6), King Of Fortune (10), Alexis Princess (11), Bahrain (3), Brave Warrior (2)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Spinning Bullet (5), Yao Man (6), Overture (2), Dixie Dash (3)
Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—JJ's Friend (2), Society Climber (6), Noble Win (9), Chances Are (7), Come In Glory (3)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Moab (7), Golden Pharaoh (6), Trieste (4), Good Landing (3)
Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Britney's Magic (4), Sir Benjo (5), El Love Señora (8), Valentine Dancer (11), Scarlet Beauty (2)
Race 7—(Qrt/Tri)—Oui Paris (3), Summer Gear (1), Kalma (2), Lord Of All (6)
Race 8—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Renzie Stays (1), Eye Candy/Ocean Deep (3), Mikaela Mia (6), Cara Dura (5), Lucky Joe (9)
Race 9—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Empire Lady (10), Daddy's Girl (9), Habagat (1), Express Strike (2), Music Ques (7), Brenda Starr (6)



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'A fresh start' for basketball

Peping slams door on BAP

By Jasmine W. Payo

PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMmittee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco appealed yesterday to basketball leaders to dismiss attempts by the Basketball Association of the Philippines to regain membership in the local Olympic body to avoid returning to the "dolorous state" of the sport.

Cojuangco said in a press statement that the country is in a "position to initiate a fresh start" and basketball officials must "discard any attempt by anyone to return the country to an erstwhile deplorable state."

Cojuangco also asked cage leaders to "focus more on new ideas and reforms that would redeem the country from the embarrassing output of poor leadership."

The BAP had announced on Monday that it will file a case against POC at the Court of Arbitration for Sport this month for illegally expelling the 60-year-old cage body.

The expulsion led to the country's suspension from all international competitions of the world basketball federation (Fiba).

BAP president Joey Lina also maintained that the best way to lift the Fiba suspension is to incorporate the major stakeholders into a restructured BAP based on a Memorandum of Understanding forged between the POC and the world cage body last year.

But Cojuangco said the requirements of the MoU were sufficiently fulfilled with the creation of a new cage group known as Pilipinas Basketball.

"We have diligently complied with these requirements and it appears that our sacrifices will bear fruit," said Cojuangco, adding that local basketball "will be in good hands" behind the new group since it will "derive its direction from organizations rather than individuals."

He said the basketball community should "not dwell on past events that resulted in the dolorous state of the sports" and focus its energies in supporting Pilipinas Basketball—the new federation backed by the PBA, PBL, UAAP and NCAA.

Puentevella says POC must brace for worst

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMMITtee must brace for the alarming possibility that First Gentleman Mike Arroyo might not lift a finger to help the country's campaign in the coming Asian Games.

POC first vice president, Rep. Monico Puentevella, said the Olympic body must start "brainstorming" in anticipation of going it alone in raising funds for the athletes who are looking forward to a stronger Asiad stint after reaching unprecedented heights during the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

While POC president Peping Cojuangco had reportedly asked for an audience with the First Gentleman in a last-ditch attempt to persuade Mr. Arroyo to reassume his fund-raising chores for RP sports, insiders said the meeting may not prosper after Cojuangco was tagged by Malacañang as one of the alleged conspirators of the destabilization plot last month.

"True we have a big problem now because even the training is shut," said Puentevella, who personally handed a POC appeal to FG two weeks ago.

ARROYO: No support this time?

Mr. Arroyo raised P160 million for the training last year of the SEAG athletes, who went on to win the overall championship of the biennial 11-nation sportsfest.

Painters seeking grand PBL exit

THAT SORRY COLLAPSE IN THE Heroes Cup title series will be the motivation for Rain or Shine in its bid for a grand exit from the Philippine Basketball League.

Rain or Shine will be playing its last tournament in the PBL when the Unity Cup opens this Saturday and new coach Leo Austria believes that he has a smarter team after that harrowing experience against Magnolia, a foldup which they plan to use as a rallying point to end 10 fruitful years in the league in style.

"We learned valuable lessons from that defeat and the boys are ready to redeem themselves," said Austria. "For us, it's just a part of our history. We have to move on if we want to succeed in the next level."

The next level is a long-cherished stint in the Philippine Basketball Association, where Austria will make his return hopefully with a winning feeling from a successful title defense in this tournament.

The Elasto Painters blew a 2-0 lead in the best-of-five series opposite the Magnolia Ice Cream Wizards, a defeat which Austria believes can happen to the best of them.

"Let's say that it was a wasted opportunity," Austria, who sat on the bench as consultant in that series, said. "Maybe, Magnolia was destined to win the title."

Team owners Raymond Yu and Terry Que are both convinced their boys will use that setback as motivation before they make the jump to the big league in October.

The Elasto Painters won six of 12 finals appearances in the league.

Torion returns . . .

From page A21

When he did, his clothesline attack on Jimmy Alapag during the dying, insignificant seconds of a lost ballgame transformed him into one of the most reviled figures in pro basketball.

Torion insists he was merely misunderstood.

"I just want to play hard whenever I'm inside the court," Torion explained. "I want to be aggressive every time that's why some people think I'm a dirty player."

Suspended indefinitely for that act, Torion was never the same person when he returned. He lost his swagger. He lost his spot in the rotation. He lost his confidence. In one game during the recent Fiesta Conference, Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao recalled Torion to the bench and ordered him to go home.

Worse, when the conference was over, he was left unsigned by the Bulls.

"I had sleepless nights for two weeks because I did not expect that I will be waived," Torion said. "I was really hurt especially when I thought of my family."

"But I respect their decision," he added. "They have been so good to me in my stint with the team especially coach Yeng."

And even here, in the familiar embrace of home, where he is trying to find his way back to the top he knows he lost more than his spot in a PBA roster.

"I was earning P150,000 a month and I know that its hard to earn that big amount now that I am not with Red Bull anymore," he said. "It's a good thing that I have saved a little amount for my family."

It was Torion's former mentor Jun Tan who asked him to return home to play for the Cebu Landmasters-Toledo City in the Mindanao-Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA).

Torion will be paid P20,000 a month this time. Still, the PBA dream burns brightly in his mind.

"My stint here in MVBA is not just about money, I want to be in shape always because I know that there's still a chance that I could return to the PBA," said Torion. "I know that I am still capable of playing competitive basketball and can still keep pace with the young players in the PBA."

And for Torion, it is a dream that will never fade away.

MIKASA
NESTEA
speedo

ALDWIN Dichoso of PATTS (right) blocks UPHSL's Elgin Elegino. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

Favored Luzon teams gain in beach volley

THE FAVORITES FROM LUZON CONTINUED to live up to expectations yesterday as they revved up their chances of making it to the Boracay phase of the 10th Nestea Beach Volley Championships.

St. Benilde notched its second straight win at the expense of Letran, 25-21, while FEU demolished Lyceum, 25-12. St. Francis downed Philippine Christian U, 25-15, and Adamson tripped UP, 25-21, to pace the men's division. All winners now carry 2-0 slates.

The lady spikers from Adamson remained unbeaten following a 25-12 win over Lyceum. The UB belles stopped University of the Cordilleras, 25-19, and St. Benilde toyed with St. Francis, 25-11,

The leading teams only need to win their closing matches today to gain entry into the Boracay phase scheduled May 4 to 6.

"But it's still hard to tell. We still have to win our closing matches to make it to Boracay," said FEU veteran Jessie Lopez.

The tournament sponsored by Speedo, MTV, Power Shot, Hey Jude, Mikasa, Cebu Pacific, Seventeen, D-Mall D'Boracay, Villa de Oro Boracay, Club Ten Boracay and La Salle Greenhills offers P100,000 each to the men's and women's champions.

There are 36 pairs competing this year—18 each in the men's and women's divisions. Sixteen of them come from Luzon, 12 from the Visayas and eight from Mindanao.

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Clark duathlon set

ALL IS SET FOR THE CLARK Asian Duathlon Championship on April 9 to be held at the Clark expo grounds in Clarkfield, Pampanga.

And with at least eight countries expected to participate, Triathlon Association of the Philippines (Trap) president Tom Carrasco Jr. says it will be one of the biggest field ever for this event.

Clark Development Corp. president Antonio Ng and Sen. Pia Cayetano are both backing the event.

Carrasco confirmed the participation of Korea, Macau, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, and the Czech Republic, the last two as guest entries being non-Asian countries.

"The International Triathlon Union, the sport's ruling international body, is very happy with the fact that in Asia, all the five different ITU events are represented," said Carrasco.

Ng has thrown his support for the event, also sponsored by PowerBar, David's Salon, Asian Centre for Insulation, the PSC, and the Metro Alliance Group, to help Clark become "another sports hub in the region and for duathlon."

"I have always been an advocate of a healthy lifestyle for all, being an active and competitive athletes myself and I will be joining the Asian duathlon championship and compete in the age group level," said Cayetano.

To carry the country's colors in the event are bemedalled national duathlon champion Ryan "Bad Boy" Mendoza, Jeffrey Valdes, Augusto Benedicto, and Arland Macasieb.

SPORTSWATCH

CAS, St. Scholastica rule WVL

COLEGIO SAN AGUSTIN AND ST. SCHOLASTICA'S COLLEGE (MANILA) asserted their might to win the Milo BEST Women's Volleyball League elementary and high school titles, respectively, last Sunday at the SBC Manila gym. The CSA girls outclassed Diliman Preparatory School, 25-8, 25-6, while the Scholasticans walloped San Antonio de Padua College, 25-20, 25-16, 25-14, both in the competitive level. Miriam College and Holy Family School shared the day's honors by bagging the elementary and high school developmental plums, respectively. Miriam came back from a slow start to beat Colegio San Agustin, 22-25, 25-16, 15-9, while Holy Family toppled St. Theresa's Collee, 25-20, 25-19, 25-14. St. James Academy of Malabon rapped School of St. Anthony, 25-19, 25, and San Beda-Alabang crushed New Era University, 25-8, 25-14, to take third spots in the high school competitive and developmental groups, respectively.

Kidz Hoops slates championships

FOUR EXCITING BASKETBALL GAMES ARE SLATED ON THE FINALS OF Kidz hoops, the only community-inspired basketball tournament for boys and girls ages 8 to 14, on March 26 at the RFM gym on Pioneer Street, Mandaluyong City. Games start at 1 p.m. Medals and individual awards—including those for the mythical five, sixth man and sportsmanship winners—will also be handed out. Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao will grace the awarding ceremonies, give an inspirational talk and award the champions. Kidz Hoops' year-round calendar has given many children the opportunity to learn the sport and polish their skills by playing the game in a safe and organized environment. For inquiries, call 3710639.

Paeng bowls perfect game

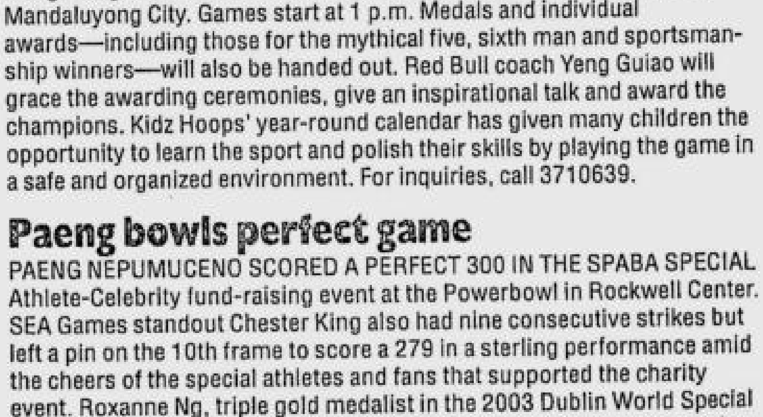
PAENG NEPUMUCENO SCORED A PERFECT 300 IN THE SPABA SPECIAL Athlete-Celebrity fund-raising event at the Powerbowl in Rockwell Center. SEA Games standout Chester King also had nine consecutive strikes but left a pin on the 10th frame to score a 279 in a sterling performance amid the cheers of the special athletes and fans that supported the charity event. Roxanne Ng, triple gold medalist in the 2003 Dublin World Special Olympic Games, dominated the field in the Special athletes division when she won in the three game category, the No-tap, Midnight Bowling and the Regular Game. Igan Foundation of broadcast host Arnold Clavio-heads the list of major sponsors of the event with Pagcor, Shell Better Mileage Gasoline, Globe Telecom-Sa Globe Posible, Accel, Antonio Cojuangco and Powerbowl. Also supporting the event are Rep. Doddo Ra Cagas, (1st Dist.-Davao del Sur), Creative Response, Anlene, Go Nuts Donuts, Unilever Phils. Teacher Mom, GMA Unang Hirit, Gatorade and Pepsi Max, Oishi, Domino's Pizza, Tree Top Apple Juice, Sterling, Doll Joy, Revicon I-on, Quake V-Cut and friends of Spaba.

Las Piñas cockfest features 80 bets

SOME 80 ENTRIES ARE EXPECTED IN TONIGHT'S STAGING OF THE PAMIGAY Premyo 3-cock derby at the Las Piñas Coliseum beginning at 7 p.m. The big number of entries is attributed to the affordable entry fee of P2,200, according to coliseum manager Alex Tobias, who is co-hosting the event with former Mayor Nene Aguilar. At stake is a guaranteed prize of P150,000. For details, call 8731040 and 8743910. Meanwhile, a bonus of P20,000 awaits the first 20 winners of LPC's regular hackfight scheduled Monday to Sunday.

Heritage Cup derby resumes

THE PHILIPPINE HERITAGE CUP 5-COCK DERBY SERIES RESUMES TODAY at the Araneta Coliseum with 60 new entries vying for the championship sponsored by Gran Matador and B-Meg Derby Ace. More than 90 fights are lined up beginning at 3 p.m. BMJ Jody Red, an entry of Batangas breeders Raffy Campos, Edwin Aranez and Boy Gamilla, topped the opening round Tuesday after tallying four wins and one draw. Each participant today is required to field five cocks. For inquiries, call 9113101 and 9112928.



A BANNER field of 21 national champion riders from Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, China, Japan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India, Guam, Great Britain, UAE, Saipan and host Philippines blasts off in the 3rd Mayor Edward Hegedorn Cup 2006 Motocross Masters of Asia Sunday in Puerto Princesa City. Thai Armon Theplib won the race.

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Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

RP shines in Fribourg

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

Brazilian juror fights for RP's 'Heremias'; whole board sits through 8-hour screening

IT WAS A BRAZILIAN JUROR—actress, producer and director Paloma Rocha—who fought "vigorously" for Filipino filmmaker Lav Diaz's "Heremias," which went on to win the Special Jury Prize at the 20th Fribourg International Film Festival, held March 12 to 19 in Switzerland.

This was disclosed to INQUIRER Entertainment by award-winning Filipino screenwriter and FIFF jury member Jose F. Lacaba.

There were five jurors in all, Lacaba said, and every single one stayed for the whole screening, which included snack and dinner breaks. The movie—about a farmer who makes a pact with God to save a girl— is eight hours long.

(See interview with Diaz on page A2-3.)

Apart from Diaz's epic, 11 other Filipino digital films were showcased at the Fribourg fest, established in 1980 and originally called "Third World Film Festival."

Then and now, the film fest "aims to promote quality films ... primarily from Asia, Africa and Latin America," according to Evelyn Vargas-Knaebel, programmer of the Filipino section dubbed "Panorama Philippines: Digital Cinema from Revolution to Ebolusyon."

"In previous years, movies from Central Asia (2004) and Palestine/Israel (2005) were presented in a comprehensive program," Knaebel explained. "This year, we selected 11 films from the Philippines ... all [shedding light] on the complexity of Filipino life."

Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil, whose "Mga Pusang Gala" was part of the RP section, participated in a forum on Pinoy cinema, along with Diaz and Lacaba.

Lacaba reported that, since the Fribourg crowd was mostly unaware of

RP SHINES/ A2-4

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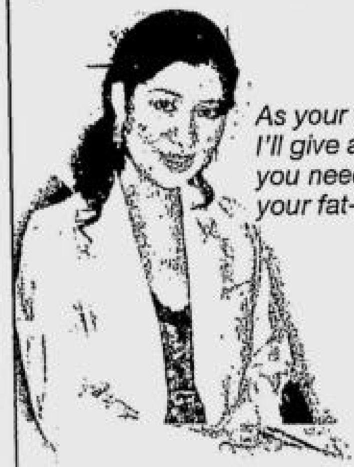

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KRIS AQUINO is currently the image model for 17 products. BETOY JOHNSON

The pitch of success

Kris gets her mom to use products she endorses

By Nini Valera

SHE WOULD DISCUSS ALMOST ANYTHING you might want to know about her—how often she needed to wash her hair, what scent she wore, her first attempt at baking a banana cake, or how well she made roast beef (this last one according to her mom).

But Kris Aquino would hold back a little about her fiancé, James Yap.

"Let's not talk about the wedding," she pleaded with INQUIRER Entertainment. "Or the money." It's a given, she said, that she earns more than the guard of the Purefoods basketball team.

What she would divulge was a tentative plan for a church ceremony, perhaps in December.

The national fascination for Kris Aquino continues. She is seen on television daily in "Game Ka Na Ba?" plus on Sundays as one of the hosts on the "The Buzz."

Kris, 35, had an explanation for her popularity: "Whether they like me or not, I'm honest."

Six years ago, Kris, who had just broken off with Phillip Salvador, father of her 10-year-old son Joshua, seemed to be at the end of her career.

"No advertiser would touch me," she admitted. Only a brand of shoe polish brought her back into the elite circle of celebrity endorsers in 2000.

Turnaround

These days, Kris—equally famous for her vanity and her chatter—is pitching 17 products, from the obscure San-San cosmetics to the high-profile clothing line Bench to the institutional macho badge that is San Miguel Beer Pale Pilsen. The latest is the new variant of Pantene shampoo.

Yes, she said, these products are found in her house— in her bathroom, for instance, Kissa Papaya soap; in her pantry, Purefoods corned beef.

"My staff has a list of all the products I endorse," said Kris. "Even in my mom's house—the products I endorse are the ones she buys."

Kris related an incident involving corned beef. Her mom, former president Cory Aquino, had been aghast when, one day, the housekeeper brought home from the grocery the brand of corned beef that Boy Abunda, not Kris, endorsed.

"My mom asked why the *majordoma* bought that; the answer was, because it was cheaper by 20 centavos," said Kris.

Boy Abunda, Kris' best friend, was so amused by the anecdote, he sent President Cory three cases of "his" corned beef brand.

Before she was signed up for Pantene, she related, she was asked to fill out a five-page questionnaire that came from Malaysia. "I told Boy, who closed the deal, that I felt like I was auditioning and I didn't like that," Kris recounted. I told him to just send to them pictures of all my billboards on Edsa."

(This was not the biggest deal for Kris, though, she admitted: "San Miguel was.")

THE PITCH/ A2-4

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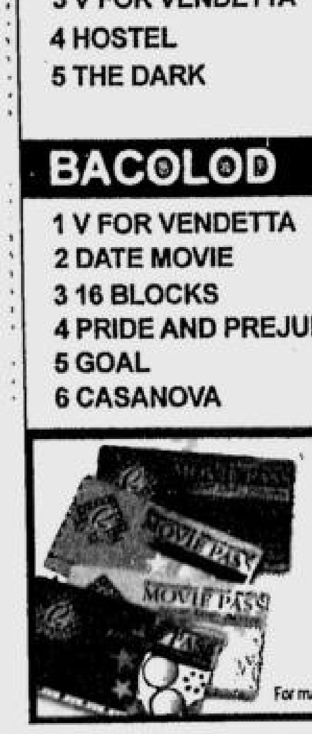

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ROUND-UP

Probe in Mozambique

MOZAMBIQUE IS A COUNTRY IN southern Africa ravaged by 16 years of civil war until 1990. Its people are hunger-stricken, many of them dying of HIV/AIDS.

Who would expect to find Filipino volunteers in this landscape of hopelessness?

Tonight after "Insider" on ABS-CBN, Cheche Lazaro and "Probe" present the story of Leo Buccahan and Imelda Escalona, two of only seven Filipino volunteers in one of the poorest countries in the world.

Buccahan and Escalona are with VSO Bahaginan, an NGO that sends volunteer Pinoy professionals to other countries.

Replays on ANC every Friday at 2 a.m. and Sunday at 11 a.m.

CHECHE Lazaro with Mozambican kids.

Mon makes it

FILIPINO jazz artist Mon David has made it to the finals of the London International Jazz Competition, which concludes today.

For the qualifying round held at The Vortex in Dalston, North London, on Saturday, David sang "No More Blues" by Carlos Antonio Jobim, "Skylark" by Hoagy Carmichael and "Waltz for Debby" by Bill Evans.

David will compete in today's showdown with five other contenders from the United States, Australia and Germany.

Director's protest

LOS ANGELES—Paul Haggis, the Canadian director of "Crash," Oscar Best Picture this year, led a protest in Hollywood against the war in Iraq, now three years old.

Haggis was joined on Saturday by other celebrities and politicians, including Martin Sheen and Maria Bello and singer and social activist Harry Belafonte.

The Hollywood protest was part of a wave of demonstrations— in Washington, San Francisco, Seattle and other cities around the world. *AFP*

Miramax sued

NEW YORK—A producer of the movie "Chicago" filed a $10-million lawsuit, charging that Miramax Films Corp. failed to pay the producer its share of hundreds of millions of dollars the movie earned.

The Producer Circle Co. says in its lawsuit filed Monday that it is the owner of the film rights to the musical "Chicago," a Broadway hit of the 1970s that Miramax agreed to produce with the company as a movie, and that it was to receive part of the film's gross.

The movie opened in December 2002 and became "the highest-grossing and most profitable movie ever released by Miramax," court papers say. It won six Oscars including Best Picture. *AP*

Statue for Shakira

BOGOTA, Colombia—Shakira, "queen" of Latin American pop music, is to be immortalized with a 16-foot iron statue in her home city on Colombia's Caribbean coast.

The statue was designed by German sculptor Dieter Patt, who decided to make the likeness of Shakira after meeting the singer during her world tour.

The sculpture, which took more than a year to complete, weighs about 5 tons—roughly 95 times as much as the diminutive singer. It arrived Sunday in Barranquilla, north of Colombia's capital. *AP*

'Brokeback' plus

LOS ANGELES—The "Brokeback Mountain" DVD will hit stores April 4, even with the film still in theatrical release.

That's a rare overlap, said a spokesperson for DVD distributor Universal Studios Home Entertainment. But, she explained, with the film still riding high on three Oscar wins, theater run has been extended, bumping into the scheduled DVD release.

The DVD's special features include a profile of Oscar-winning director Ang Lee and interviews with Oscar-winning screenwriters Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana. Stars Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal also discuss the training for their roles as cowboys in love.

The DVD is expected to sell for $29.98. *AP*

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What's Lav got to do with it?

A few minutes with the maker of 10-hour movies

TAKE FIVE

By Marinel R. Cruz

FILMMAKER LAV DIAZ, WHOSE EIGHT-hour film "Heremias" bagged the Special Jury Prize at the recently concluded 20th Fribourg International Film Festival in Switzerland, originally planned the movie to be 15 hours long.

"Heremias" stars Ronnie Lazaro as a farmer who fasts for 40 days and nights, Diaz told INQUIRER Entertainment in an interview at his Quezon City home a month before he left for Switzerland.

The movie follows the 40-day fast. It was one of Lazaro's biggest challenges as an actor, Diaz noted.

Diaz is known for lengthy films. His "Ebolusyon ng Isang Pamilyang Pilipino," which runs for 11 hours, is by far the longest Pinoy film ever made. It won the Urian (local critics) Best Picture award last year. "Batang West Side," which won Best Film at the Singapore International Film Festival in 2002, is five hours long.

"People who said movies should be only two to three hours long are only after profit," Diaz insisted. "This is so they could have as many as seven theater screenings a day."

Diaz's other works are "Hesus Rebolusyonaryo" (2002), "Hubad sa Ilalim ng Buwan" (1999), "Burger Boys" (1999) and "Kriminal ng Baryo Concepcion" (1998).

"I wouldn't mind if only eight people saw my movies [at this point]. Eventually—not in my lifetime, I guess—more people will appreciate them. I'm concerned about the viewers, how their growth is stunted. [But] what can we expect? For almost a hundred years, they were fed Hollywood stuff."

It would take a while for Filipino audience to learn new things, Diaz conceded. But he remains hopeful: "An artist should accept this bitter fact. Filipinos are currently obsessed with other things, especially politics. We can't expect things to change at the snap of a finger, [but] we should not underestimate the audience's capacity to embrace a new perspective."

Diaz was featured in last year's Ekran, an annual publication of the Slovenian (Central Europe) Cinematheque.

Ekran, established in 1962 by the Union of Slovene Cultural Organizations, publishes reviews for film and television productions and film artists who go beyond the mainstream, according to website www.culturalprofiles.org.uk/slovenia. Filipino writers Noel Vera, Mike Feria and Alexis Tioseco—as well as other European and Asian authors—wrote extensively about Diaz.

"Why don't [critics] read reviews from the US and Europe?" Diaz wondered. "People there have greater appreciation for my work. I know because I've participated in a lot of festivals there from October to December of last year."

To young filmmakers, the award-winning director has this to say: "You don't have to go very far to change the world. Just contribute in your own little way."

What, to you, is "indie"?

It [comes] from the word independent—*hindi hawak ng kahit anong* studio system. We can do anything. We're free. Actually, the word has been bastardized. Some people use the label for their own agenda [and] jump into the indie bandwagon. Even big studios like Viva and Unitel films claim they are indie. The bottom line is, do you have a vision? Are you conscious of aesthetics? Are you a responsible filmmaker? What is your message to your audience? Are you sure you're not just after the money?

You talk about vision, what do you think is every indie filmmaker's dream?

To be free. There are a number of indie filmmakers who have worked, and are working, mainstream. I've worked with Mother Lily (Monteverde of Regal Entertainment). *Ginawa ko ang gusto ko*. Although there were limitations in terms of money and length of film, I fought for my vision. If you feel that you are not working in an environment that is free, get out of there. *Mas maganda yung malaya ka*. That's indie for me.

Indie directors agree that, with new technology, making films is now much easier.

There's a deluge of new work. *Ang daming gumagawa*. Because of this, we face mediocrity. Not just anyone can grab a camera and shoot—that's not filmmaking. Filmmaking is about vision, about art. We shall see if we Filipinos can embrace the digital movement as part of cinema.

We should embrace change. It's quite liberating for struggling artist like me. We shouldn't turn our backs on it. *Nahirapan din ako*. For the last three years, I wasn't sure I could embrace digital. I still wanted to use film, *kaya lang* nine years *na itong* 'Ebolusyon' *hindi pa natatapos*. It had already cost me P200,000. So I said, 'let's go digital.' I finished the movie after eight months. Add the one year it took for post production, *murang mura lang*.

What can the government do to help develop the "digital movement?"

I don't think the government can do much. But it's important that the government is aware of the role of the arts in Pinoy culture. *Importante ito sa pagpapayabong ng kalinangan at kamalayan ng tao.*

DIAZ: "We should embrace change."

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3	NANNY McPHEE 1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00 G
4	GLORY ROAD 12:30, 3:10, 5:50, 8:30, 11:00 G

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② ULTRAVIOLET
MTRCB PG-13
1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00 LMF

④ GLORY ROAD
MTRCB GP
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GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 ULTRAVIOLET	2 NORTH COUNTRY					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX ULTRAVIOLET GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX NORTH COUNTRY GUARANTEED SEATS	3 GLORY ROAD GUARANTEED SEATS	4 V FOR VENDETTA GUARANTEED SEATS	5 NANNY MCPHEE GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX NORTH COUNTRY	2 NANNY MCPHEE	3 ULTRAVIOLET	4 SHE'S THE MAN	5 GLORY ROAD		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 CASANOVA	2 LAST HOLIDAY	3 FINAL DESTINATION 3	4 SYRIANA			
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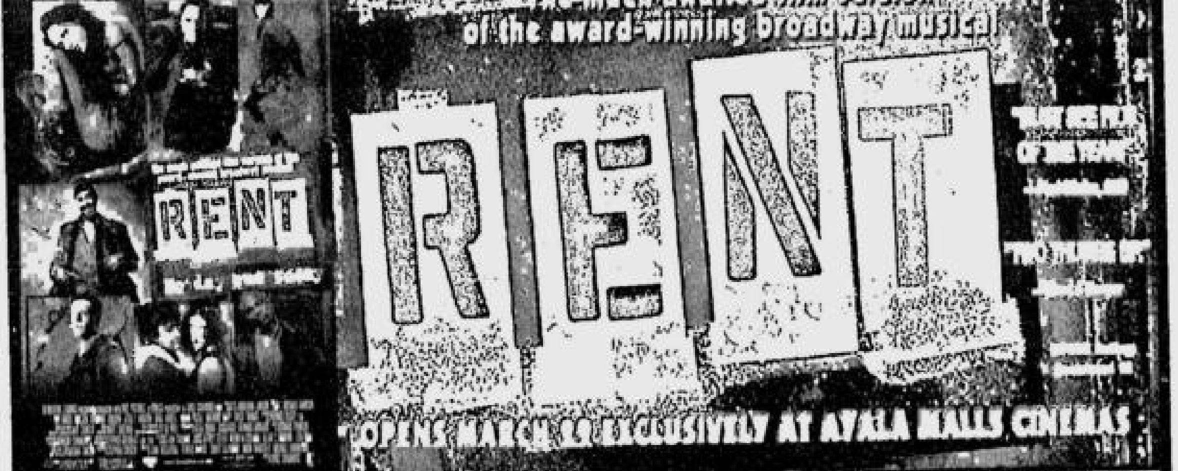

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Moviegoing to the max

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WE'RE THRILLED TO LEARN THAT SM'S NEW Mall of Asia will house the country's first Imax moviehouse. Imax (Image Maximum) is the wave of the future in films worldwide, and in fact has been an actuality in countries like the US, Canada and Japan for some years now.

In the course of our travels, we've watched movies in two Imax theaters, and can vouch for the fact that the process' huge, curved screen, newfound projection systems and 3-D glasses give moviegoers a spectacular viewing experience. In fact, it redefines film viewing.

Due to the Imax system's panoramic screen, dramatic viewing situation and "womblike" configuration of seats, you feel like you're surrounded by the film action. Even better, you get to the point where you become a "participant" in that action.

This, of course, is what many filmmakers want their movies to achieve—to involve their viewers fully in what's happening, for complete empathy. This is desirable because viewers can understand and experience what a movie's characters are thinking and feeling.

True, the Imax screen is friendlier and more welcoming to 3-D action, adventure and fantasy productions and these will most likely comprise most of the initial offerings at the Mall of Asia's Max theater.

After the first surge of excitement abates, however, other film types could find their way to that giant screen. What's important is that the new process makes moviegoing a more totally absorbing experience.

The expense of putting up an Imax theater is huge, but we trust that, after the new moviehouse experiences, SRO audiences for months on end, other cineplexes will want to put up Imax movie houses of their own.

What about a Filipino movie shot the Imax way? That'll take even more doing, because the new process' shooting and post-production phases are extra-expensive.

Again, however, you can bet that there are some local producers out there who are already thinking up appropriately big and visual story idea, one of which could become the first Filipino Imax film! Maybe, as early as next year?

Woman power

CHARLIZE Theron is a great screen beauty, but she's gone beyond physical pulchritude in search of thespic challenges, and has in fact been acting against type. She did so to great acclaim in "Monster," and follows up with a similarly gritty performance in her latest starrer, "North Country."

She plays single mother Josey Aimes, who rallies her female co-workers to rise above the unfair treatment they get at a mining company.

Theron sees the conflict as largely a question of survival: The existing workforce is predominantly male, and the workers are threatened when women come in and take their jobs.

She says she was drawn to the role because Josey Aimes represents the potential that remains untapped in many people, both female and male.

"I'm fascinated by people who don't realize they have incredible internal fortitude and ability," she shares. "They discover it only when they get themselves into situations that require it, or realize some truth that others don't get.

"The road Josey takes is a very lonely one and not one she is obligated to choose. But she does, and she paves the way for others who are going through the same difficulties. That takes a strong and special person, and I love the way Josey finds the inner reserve of courage that she didn't realize she had." Niki Caro directs.

RP shines . . .

From page A2-1

Pinoy movies, the discussion became an introduction, too, tackling the industry's history, and its present problems.

Marfil told the audience: "The local film industry used to produce over 200 films yearly, but only 10 had been invited to film fests abroad. Last year, we [released] only 50 to 60 films, but half of them—24 to 30—has so far been invited abroad."

It was Marfil's first time to screen her debut film before a foreign audience. "Norwegian critic Jorunn Stone Johansen told me that she laughed and cried throughout the screening."

For his part, Diaz recounted that, apart from the jurors, serious film enthusiasts saw "Heremias" in full.

"I was trying to catch real time [in making the movie]—the rhythm of rural life," he said.

He said the Special Jury Prize recognizes "Philippine cinema as part of the discourse on world cinema."

Marfil happily reported that foreign distributors had expressed interest in Filipino films.

"Swiss distributors, theater owners and film journalists had also been invited to the festival," Knaebel added.

Through the years, FIFF screenings have been expanded to more than 30 cities and towns in Switzerland, Italy and Austria.

The pitch . . .

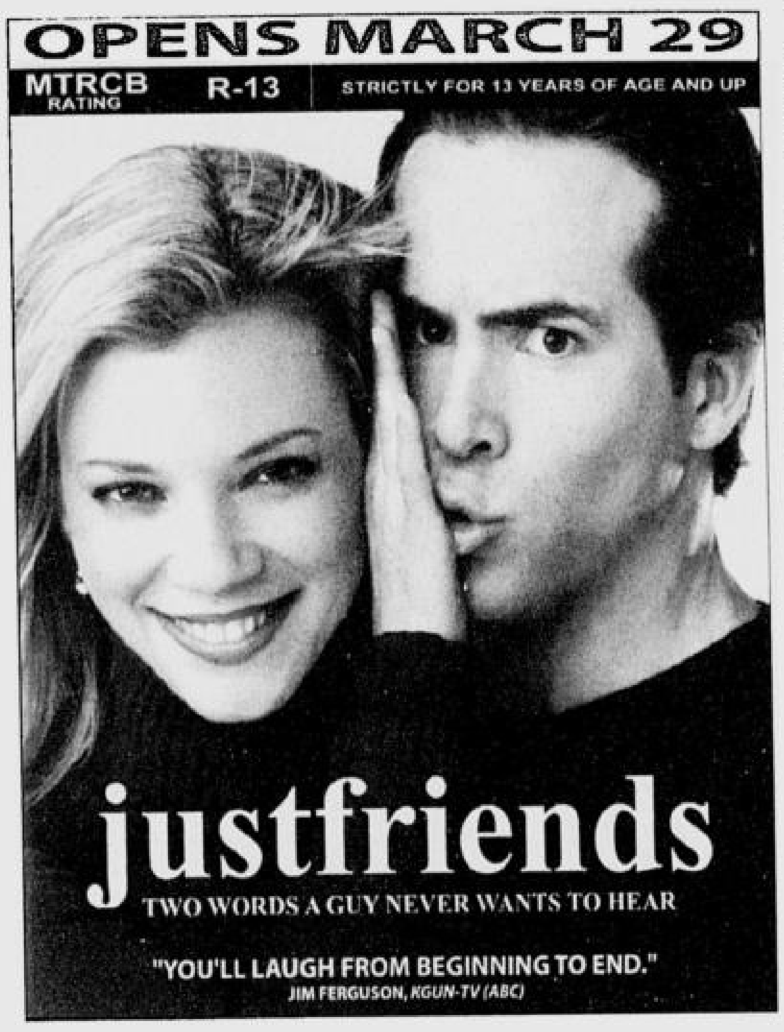
From page A2-1

Since shooting the commercial in Bangkok last year, Kris has darkened her hair, to the consternation of Direk Chito Rono, who hasn't finished shooting a movie with her and Claudine Barretto. He pointed out that she couldn't have brown hair in one scene and black in the next!

"He was really annoyed," Kris said.

At the moment, that's the only downside to Kris' almost perfect life.

"I like myself best now," she said. "When you're in your 30s and at the peak of your beauty, and you know you've done something with your life but you're still excited about each day ... I like it that James is here. He's supportive and calm."



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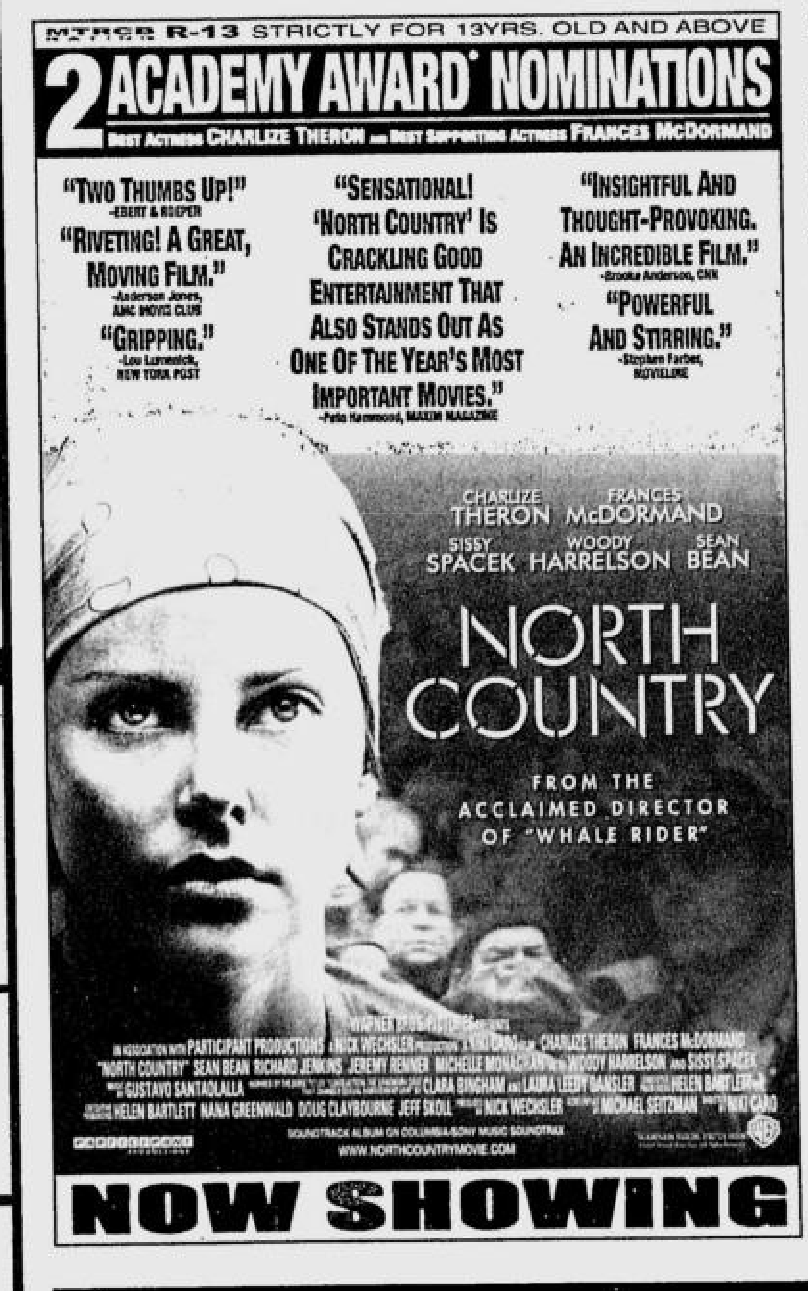

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ANIMALL CINEMAS

1	V FOR VENDETTA 12:00 / 2:40 / 5:20 / 8:00	2	ULTRAVIOLET 12:05 R2 / 1:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
			NANNY McPHEE 12:05 R2 / 1:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
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06:10 / 08:20 LFS
08:50 LMF / 11:00 END

NANNY McPHEE
02:00 FS / 02:25 MF / 04:35
06:45 / 8:25LFS
09:00 LMF / 10:40 END

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1. ULTRAVIOLET
   10:15FS / 10:40 MF / 12:30 /
   02:20 / 04:10 / 6:00 / 7:50
   09:10LFS / 09:40 LMF
   11:10 END
2. V FOR VENDETTA
3. SHE'S THE MAN
4. RENOVATION
5. NORTH COUNTRY
6. NANNY McPHEE
7. FEARLESS
8. SHAGGY DOG
9. 16 BLOCKS
10. FINAL DESTINATION 3
11. THE DARK
12. GLORY ROAD

SM CITY NORTH EDSA

1. NANNY McPHEE
2. GLORY ROAD
3. NORTH COUNTRY
4. RESERVED
5. FINAL DESTINATION 3
6. SHE'S THE MAN
7. V FOR VENDETTA
8. ULTRAVIOLET

SM CITY DASMARINAS

1. THE DARK
2. UNDERCLASS MAN
3. SHAGGY DOG
4. LAST HOLIDAY

SM CITY FAIRVIEW

1. FEARLESS
2. HOUSE OF FURY
3. THE DARK
4. V FOR VENDETTA
5. FINAL DESTINATION 3
6. GLORY ROAD
7. ULTRAVIOLET
8. NANNY McPHEE
9. SHE'S THE MAN
10. 16 BLOCKS
11. CLOSE TO YOU
12. SHAGGY DOG

SM CITY STA. MESA

1. ULTRAVIOLET
2. V FOR VENDETTA
3. GLORY ROAD
4. SHE'S THE MAN
5. FINAL DESTINATION 3
6. FEARLESS
7. NANNY McPHEE
8. 16 BLOCKS
9. NORTH COUNTRY
10. SHAGGY DOG

SM CITY BICUTAN

1. ULTRAVIOLET
2. V FOR VENDETTA
3. HOUSE OF FURY
4. THE DARK

SM CITY SAN LAZARO

1. ULTRAVIOLET
2. SHAGGY DOG
3. V FOR VENDETTA
4. FINAL DESTINATION 3
5. SHE'S THE MAN
6. NANNY McPHEE

SM CITY MANILA

1. ULTRAVIOLET
2. 16 BLOCKS
3. BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
4. SHE'S THE MAN
5. NANNY McPHEE
6. V FOR VENDETTA
7. GLORY ROAD
8. FEARLESS
9. FINAL DESTINATION 3
10. SHAGGY DOG
11. THE DARK
12. NORTH COUNTRY

SM CITY SOUTHMALL

1. ULTRAVIOLET
2. 16 BLOCKS
3. NORTH COUNTRY
4. V FOR VENDETTA
5. NANNY McPHEE
6. GLORY ROAD
7. SHE'S THE MAN
8. FINAL DESTINATION 3
9. FEARLESS
10. RESERVED

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1. SHAGGY DOG
2. FINAL DESTINATION 3
3. HOUSE OF FURY
4. GLORY ROAD

SM CITY SUCAT

1. HOUSE OF FURY
2. ULTRAVIOLET
3. V FOR VENDETTA
4. 16 BLOCKS

LUZON

SM CITY BAGUIO

1. 16 BLOCKS
2. SHAGGY DOG
3. THE DARK
4. V FOR VENDETTA

SM CITY MARILAO

1. V FOR VENDETTA
2. HOUSE OF FURY
3. SHAGGY DOG
4. THE DARK

SM CITY BATANGAS

1. BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
2. THE DARK
3. FEARLESS
4. AEON FLUX

SM CITY BACOOR

1. FEARLESS
2. SHAGGY DOG
3. V FOR VENDETTA
4. GLORY ROAD
5. FINAL DESTINATION 3
6. SHE'S THE MAN
7. HOUSE OF FURY
8. BREAKING NEWS

SM CITY STA. ROSA

1. FINAL DESTINATION 3
2. BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
3. 16 BLOCKS
4. CASANOVA

SM CITY PAMPANGA

1. SYRIANA
2. SHAGGY DOG
3. FINAL DESTINATION 3
4. V FOR VENDETTA
5. THE DARK
6. 16 BLOCKS

SM CITY LUCENA

1. AEON FLUX
2. FEARLESS
3. UNDERCLASS MAN
4. SYRIANA

SM CITY MOLINO

1. SHAGGY DOG
2. HOUSE OF FURY
3. V FOR VENDETTA
4. CRY WOLF

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU

1. SYRIANA
   12.00FS / 12:18 MF
   02:36 / 04:54
   07: 12 / 09:20 LFS
   09:30 LMF / 11:40 END
2. CASANOVA
   12.00FS / 12:18 MF
   02:36 / 04:54
   07:12 / 09:03 LFS
   09:30 LMF / 11:20 END
3. V FOR VENDETTA
   11:15FS / 11:30 MF
   02:00 / 04:30
   07:00 / 09:15 LFS
   09:30 LMF / 11:45 END
4. LAST HOLIDAY
5. CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
6. FEARLESS
7. NEW WORLD
8. HOUSE OF FURY

SM CITY ILOILO

1. FEARLESS
2. RESERVED
3. SYRIANA
4. CRY WOLF
5. V FOR VENDETTA
6. SHAGGY DOG
7. RESERVED
8. PRIDE & PREJUDICE

SM CITY DAVAO

1. BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
2. GOAL
3. V FOR VENDETTA
4. FINAL DESTINATION 3
5. PRIDE & PREJUDICE
6. NEW WORLD

SM CITY CAGAYAN

1. NEW WORLD
2. BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
3. 16 BLOCKS
4. YOUR'S MINE & OURS

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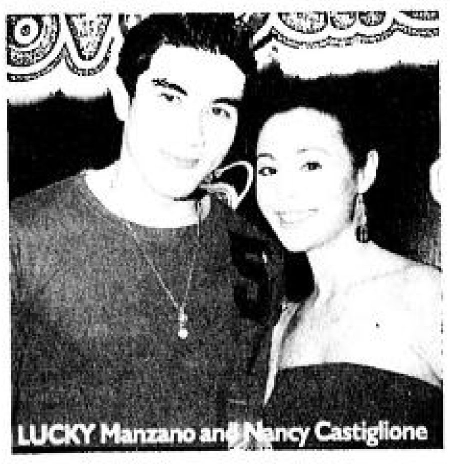
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Sexbomb's 'last dance'

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

A CONCERNED FRIEND OF JOY CANCIO defends Sexbomb's beleaguered manager regarding the group's departure from the noontime show "Eat Bulaga."

The *amiga* lamented: " My heart goes out to Joy because people blame her. In fact, she was the one bypassed by **Sugar** and her mom. When Sugar's contract expired she didn't bother to inform Joy that she had a management deal with TAPE Inc. To think that Joy had taken Sugar back even though she had joined a rival group ('Kendeng Girls' of the 'Pera o Bayong' portion of 'MTB')."

Joy's pal continued: "Sugar is playing the underdog to gain public sympathy. She's shedding crocodile tears! One more thing, Joy didn't order her girls not to appear in a show at Klowns. She was told that the show had been cancelled. I pity her; she's up against powerful people."

The friend says the public should be fair and give Joy credit for Sexbomb's success.

Is it possibile for Sexbomb to return to "Bulaga"? The friend sighed, 'Joy is open but she received a text from a TAPE bigwig that sounded final."

If so, the Sexbomb dancers shouldn't act as if they've performed their "last dance."

They only need to dance to a different beat and reinvent themselves. "Dance like nobody's watching," as my fave quote goes.

But as far as the Sexbombs are concerned, they need to dance because everybody's watching.

(Catch them Wednesdays at Laffline and Thursdays at Punchline.)

Just asking

"MOMENTS of Love" has an uncanny resemblance to a "Twilight Zone" story called "A Message For Charity." Is it pure coincidence?

* * *

Could it be true that **Rico Robles** almost backed out of "Pinoy Big Brother" when he found out that **Roxie Barcelo** was one of the housemates? They got too close for comfort when Roxie was a "practicumer" in RX 93, where Rico is a DJ. Now that they've both been evicted, they're still bickering. What's with this strange duo? Neither friends nor lovers? But if they are "insignificant others," why are they both affected by what the other does or doesn't do?

* * *

Did you know that the upcoming movie "D Lucky Ones" was supposed to be entitled "I Love You, Lucky?" But **Vilma Santos** requested Star Cinema not to use her signature line because she's reserving it for a play.

I wonder who Lucky (**Luis Manzano**) loves. He's been linked to **Nancy Castiglione**, **Toni Gonzaga** and **Karel Marquez**? I remember teasing him about **KC Concepcion**, too.

He just smiles and says, "I think even before we were born, KC and I were already being paired because of our moms." Wouldn't they make a mega couple for all seasons?

On "PBB," **Rustom Padilla** had the guts to admit that he's gay (though he didn't really have to state the obvious). I wonder if another housemate (evicted or not—make a wild guess) will have the courage to let his/her dark secret out. A real turn off! It will make his/her followers turn the TV off.

* * *

Guess who's this beauty queen who's a certified kleptomaniac. A schoolmate of hers told me that, during their college days, she was ordered by the principal to apologize to the entire student body for all the stuff that she had stolen. She's also a scene-stealer. The beauty queen gets a kick out of telling everybody that an award-winning actor is her boyfriend. But when I asked the actor about her, he said that they split up a long time ago. Is the klepto in her raring to steal him away from his current girl?

Disco excess

Groove to Hed Kandi Classic Hits on March 31, 9 p.m., at the World Trade Center. Call 726-2523 or 723-8673

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.)

Solace, Miguel Castro, release debut albums

SPIN CITY

THE FOUR-PIECE BAND SOLACE HAS released its debut album, "Never Easy"—10 tracks of sundry styles from classic rock to alternative rock.

Formed last year, the band is led by Chad Canares on vocals. On lead guitar is Sam Codilla; on bass, Rodney Vidanes; and on drums, Herson Fremista.

Vicor Sundays

To mark its 40th year, Vicor Music Corp. has tied up with Yes-FM for a month-long event featuring Vicor's biggest talents.

On March 26, Randy Santiago will perform in "4 Decades of Pop"; on April 2, Ito Rapadas will be on "Easy Listening Bands"; on April 9, "Pinoy Folk and Rock" will feature Lolita Carbon and Pendon Aban of Asin.

Limited edition Vicor CDs will be given away during the month.

Chosen one

Hip-hop star Kanye West returns with his second album, "Late Registration."

The producer-turned-rapper made music headlines last year by winning three Grammys for his debut album "The College Dropout." Jamie Foxx, Adam Levine, Jay-Z and Brandy are featured on "Late Registration."

Stylistics' greatest

The biggest hits of The Stylistics are included in "The Stylistics Live in Norfolk," from Viva Records, released both on CD and DVD.

The collection includes "Betcha by Golly Wow," "Stop, Look, Listen to Your Heart," "You are Everything," "Break Up to Make Up," "You Make Me Feel Brand New" and "You'll Never Get to Heaven if You Break my Heart."

Miguel's CD-lite

A CD-lite of OPM love songs titled "Miguel Castro Sings..." is now available at all leading record bars and music outlets in Metro Manila.

Castro is a theater actor, writer and director for Gantimpala Theater Foundation.

The album consists of six new songs, four of them written and composed by Vince de Jesus.

SOLACE

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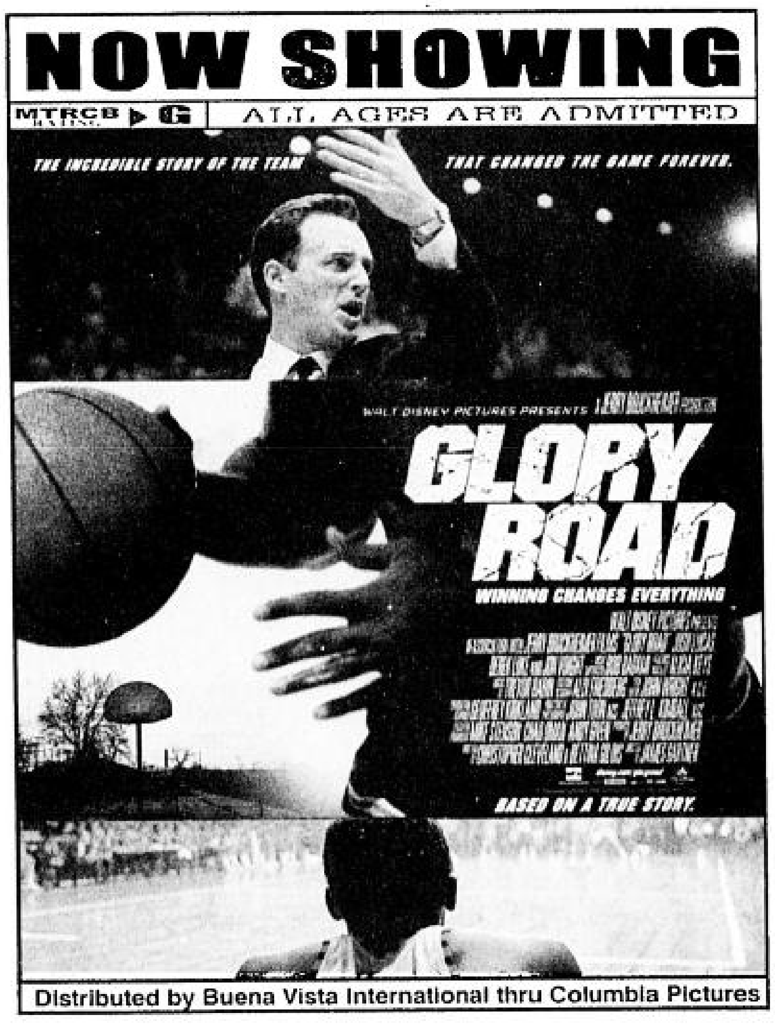
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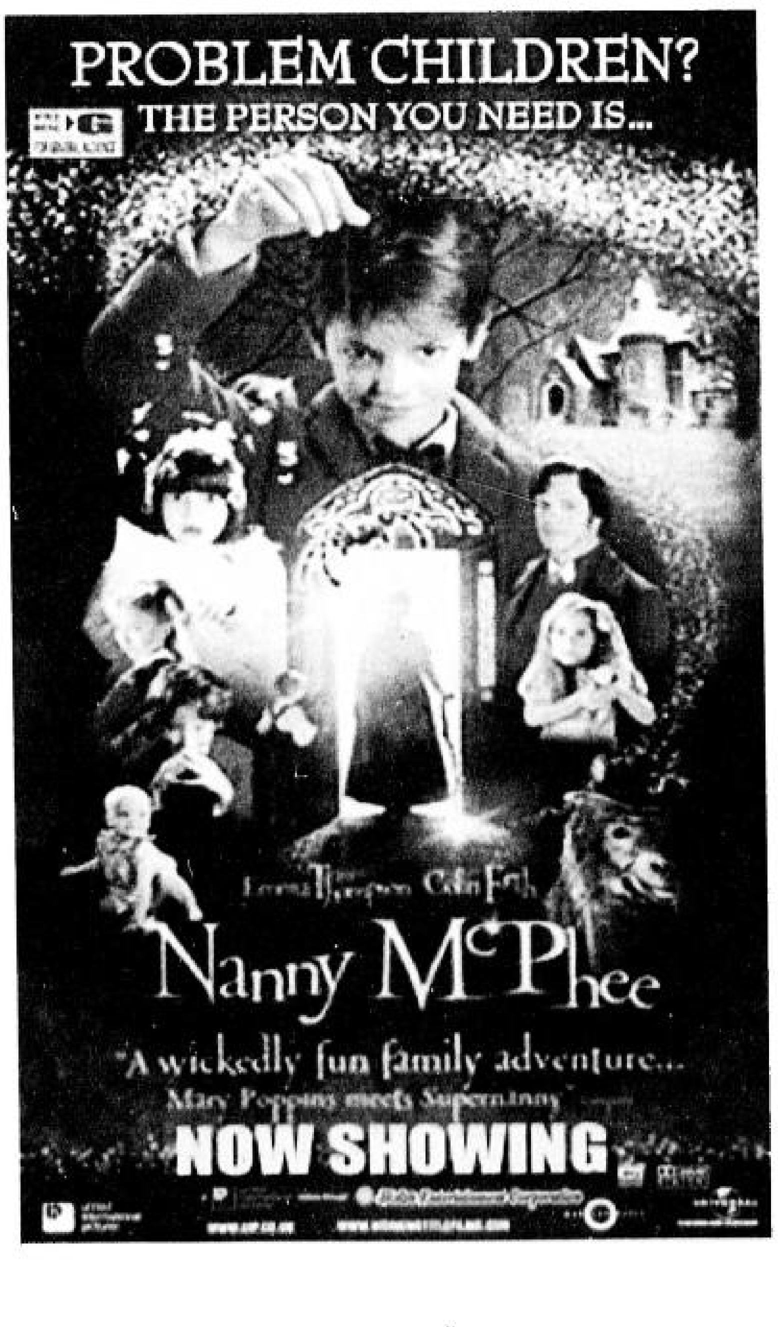
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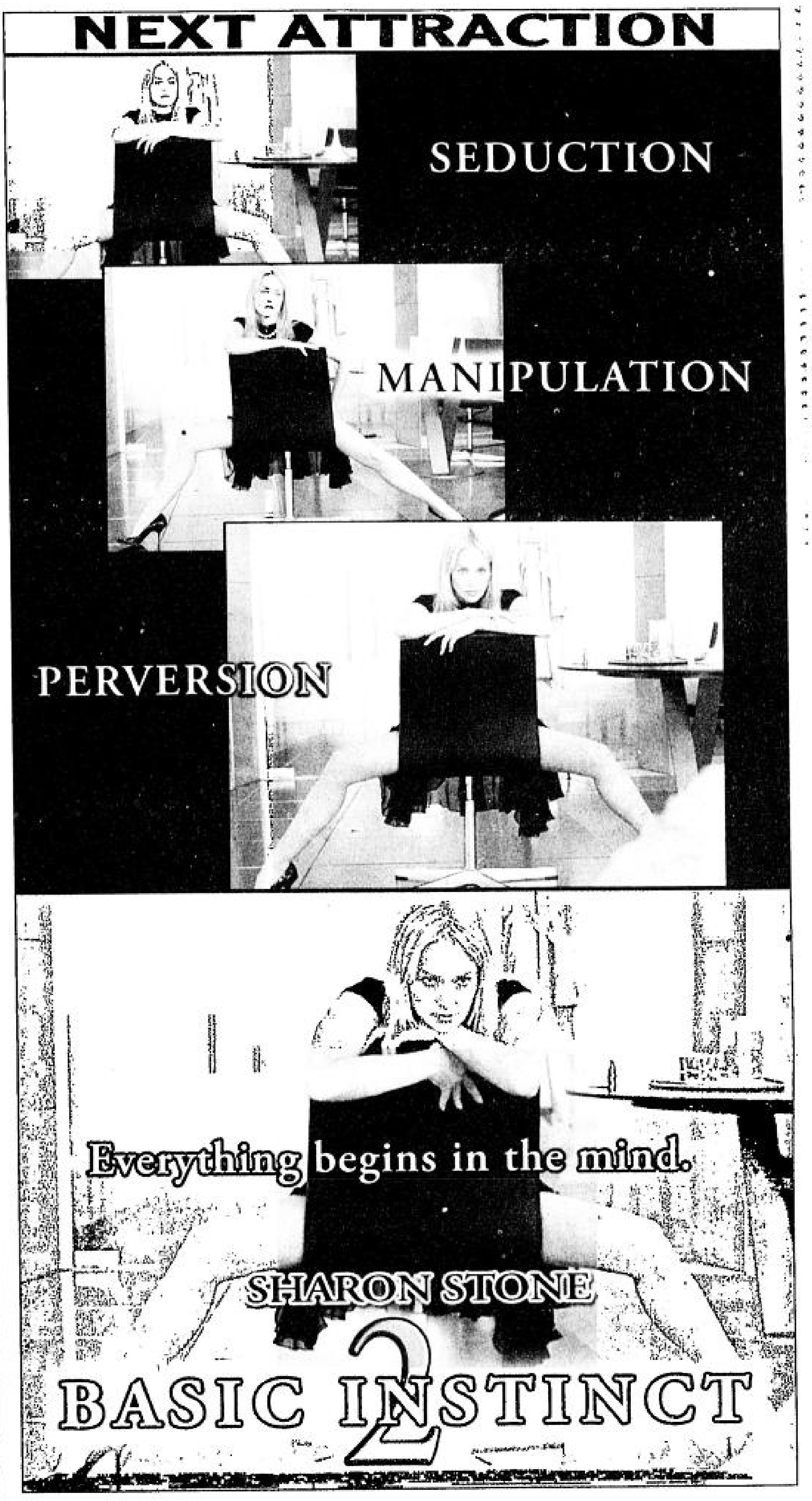
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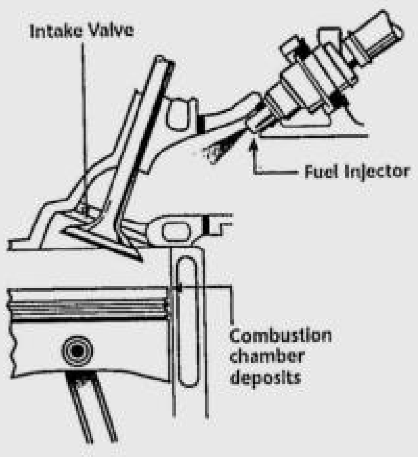
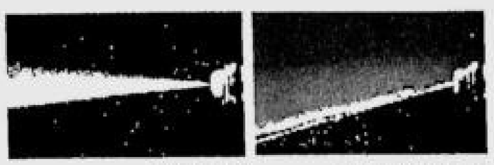
All Caltex branded gasoline grades now contain a technologically advanced, specially formulated and patented fuel system cleaning ingredient, Techron®. Thanks to this revolutionary new ingredient, New Caltex with Techron® is unbeatable at cleaning vital engine parts in your car's fuel system, so both car and driver can perform at their very best at all times.



New Caltex fuel with Techron® cleans the car's intake system, including fuel injectors and intake valves. Fuel injectors are designed to accurately meter fuel to the engine and to deliver it in a precise pattern of fine droplets. The fuel passages are extremely small and therefore susceptible and sensitive to deposits in the critical regions where the fuel is metered and atomized. If the injector is dirty, this results in poor combustion and poor vehicle performance.

Intake Valves on the other hand are like metal doors that open and close at specific times in the combustion cycle. It is the opening and closing of these valves that control the air and fuel mixture entering your engine. If deposits gather in the intake valve, the flow of air and fuel into the engine will be adversely affected, again further reducing car performance. Deposits form on the intake valve when the fuel, lubricant residues, re-circulated exhaust gas or even improperly formulated fuel additives break down due to high temperatures in your engine. Another adverse effect is reduced fuel economy as well as reduced power and acceleration.



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Using New Caltex fuel with Techron® has five main benefits. First, using Caltex with Techron® restores lost power and acceleration. The unbeatable cleaning power of Techron® helps give back the lost power and acceleration or pick-up caused by deposit build-up. Caltex with Techron® cleans fuel injectors, intake ports, manifolds and valves to help restore the car's maximum power output.

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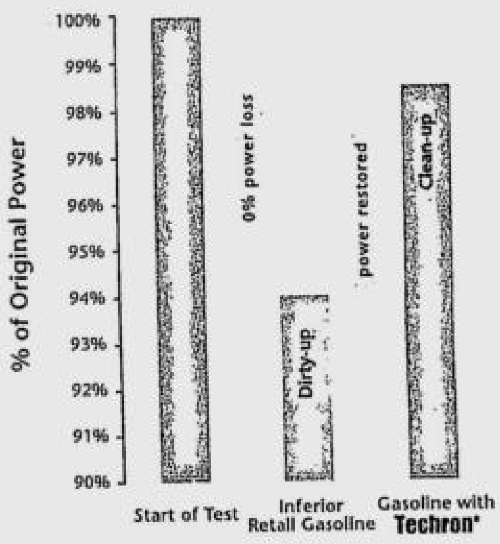

Secondly, using Caltex with Techron® improves fuel economy. Simply put, a clean engine burns fuel more completely and efficiently, allowing the car's engine to use the fuel more thoroughly, right to the last drop.

Third, using Caltex with Techron® reduces exhaust emissions. Since Techron® removes performance-robbing deposits from vital engine parts, the car will operate more efficiently with better combustion. This will result in lower emissions that should greatly benefit the environment as well.

Fourth, Caltex with Techron® delivers smooth performance. Using Caltex with Techron® ensures that the car's fuel system will deliver optimum and enhanced drivability. This translates to a car being more responsive and snappy compared to a car choked up with deposits.

Finally, using Caltex with Techron® enhances a car's reliability. To test this, Caltex partnered with the San Diego Yellow Cab Company in an extensive field test which logged over 130 million kilometers to show the improved performance of cars. Thanks to the unbeatable cleaning power of Techron®.

New Caltex fuel with Techron® is the first step to a cleaner, smoother and more enjoyable ride ahead for the Filipino motorists. So go visit your nearest Caltex station and ask for a tank full of New Caltex with Techron® now.

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TECHRON
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CALTEX

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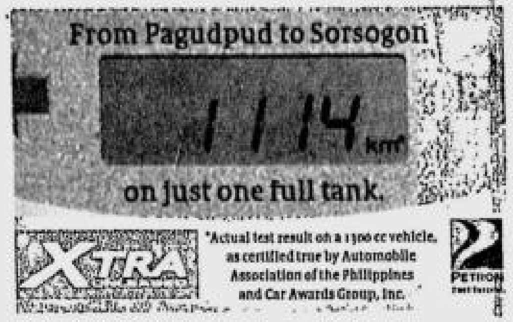

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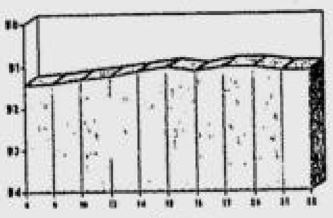

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As of 5 p.m., March 22, 2006

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STOCK MARKET

Shares close flat

SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY CLOSED FLAT AS investors took a breather after the benchmark index on Tuesday hit its highest level in more than six years, dealers said.

The composite index ended down 1.01 points at 2,184.70 after moving between 2,173.44 and 2,187.49.

Volume reached 797.7 million shares worth P972.7 million ($19 million). Gainers led losers 49 to 40, with 63 stocks unchanged.

AFP

For RP, outlook remains positive

Bear Stearns expects economy to grow at a faster rate in 2006

By Michelle V. Remo

US-BASED INVESTMENT BANK BEAR STEARNS & CO. INC. HAS retained its positive outlook on the Philippines despite recent political turmoil, projecting that the country's economy will even grow at a faster rate of 5.8 percent this year.

Last year, the economy grew by only 5.1 percent.

In a paper on its assessment of the country, the investment bank said the ability of the Arroyo administration to weather political problems, including so-called coup attempts, gave the institution reason to believe that the economy was not in danger.

"One important reason [why a segment of the Philippine military] failed to gain any significant public support is that the economy is showing signs of recovery in 2006, and the Manila middle class is unwilling to jeopardize this," Bear Stearns said.

The bank said factors that could help trigger higher growth in gross domestic product (GDP) this year included the increase in foreign direct investments (FDIs) and portfolio equity investments last year.

Bear Stearns noted that FDIs in 2005, as a ratio of GDP, reached one percent. This was better than the measly 0.1 percent recorded the previous year. Total investments last year stood at 19 percent of GDP, higher than the 17.4 percent recorded in 2004.

It said the business process outsourcing industry and the mining sector would be key growth areas for this year and the next.

As to the export sector, Bear Stearns does not share the concern of some economists over its dwindling competitiveness.

The investment bank said the year-on-year export growth in January, recorded at 0.7 percent, could be due to the seasonality factor, considering that exports grew by a substantial amount in December.

In December, exports grew 15.7 percent from the previous year.

But Bear Stearns added that the likely in-

BEAR/ B2

ERSATZ DOUGH
William Chan of the United States Secret Service (left) and Ross Bautista of the National Bureau of Investigation report that high quality counterfeit dollar bills have found its way into the country. *(See story on page B6).* AFP

DOTC drops bid to raise MRT fares; state subsidy to continue

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT has dropped its bid to raise fares of the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) this year, citing the difficult economic situation now facing commuters.

This means the national government will have to continue subsidizing the operations of the overhead rail system, which carries close to half a million passengers along the length of Edsa each day.

In a telephone interview, Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) Undersecretary Guiling Mamondiong said riders of the MRT system are already financially burdened as it is, even without the proposed fare hike which officials initially pegged at P10 per passenger last year.

"With the EVAT [in full swing], they really can't afford it anymore," he said.

Mamondiong said the proposal for a fare hike was presented last year to President Macapagal-Arroyo for her approval. So far, Malacañang has yet to act on it, prompting him to assume that the proposal has been thumbed down.

"I think there will be no more fare hike this year," he said, adding that the transportation department will no longer press the issue. "The commuters cannot afford it, so we will not leave them in the lurch."

The DOTC deputy chief pointed out, however, that without the fare increase, continued government financial support would be critical for the rail system to enable it to continue operations.

Mamondiong explained that, at present fare levels, the government subsi-

DOTC/ B3

WHAT'S INSIDE

BREAKTIME
Billion duller baby /B2
Malampaya oil project seen to start soon /B3

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Billion duller baby

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

AFTER ONLY EIGHT MONTHS of scheming to take over RP's third largest bank Equitable PCI, the SM group now stands to reap a windfall, amounting only to, oh, some dull P8 billion.

Again—P8 billion! And after only eight months! That's a billion a month!

The genius behind such an amazing investment feat is Tessie Sy Coson, daughter of mall developer Henry Sy, who sits on the board of EPCIB and heads its executive commitee.

Just a couple of days ago, Tessie Sy Coson indicated in media reports that she would sell the SM group's interest in EPCIB, but only on certain conditions.

One of them, in effect, is that P8-billion windfall. She said that she wanted cash at such a price. Also, the buyer does not get the benefit of ... well, "due diligence."

Offered for the SM holdings in EPCIB, reportedly, is a price of P95 a share, courtesy of a still secret buyer under a deal arranged by GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia, who has been fighting the SM group's bid to take over EPCIB.

At such a price, the SM group holdings in the bank can easily fetch P18 billion.

But the SM group only spent a little more than P10 billion for the shares.

Thus, the SM group is only going to make P8 billion. No sweat.

* * *

NOW, it's one thing for Tessie Sy Coson to sell the SM group's interest in EPCIB at such a handsome profit, and she must get CASH, at that.

But it is quite another for her to pay CASH for the EPCIB holdings of the SSS—and at that same attractive price.

Remember, a few years ago, the SM group tried to buy the EPCIB holdings of the SSS for only P43 a share—payable after seven years, at that!

And then, after the SM group bought out the Go family in EPCIB last year, and Tessie Sy Coson left the board of Banco de Oro to sit on the board of EPCIB, she gave the other EPCIB stockholders another bad offer.

She wanted to "merge" EPCIB with BDO. This meant that the SSS and the GSIS would not get CASH for their shares in EPCIB, but only some more pieces of paper.

Under the proposal, the pricing for EPCIB shares was also appallingly low—at about P64 a share. Of course, Tessie Sy Coson later announced in media that her offer was still negotiable. This is one wise billionaire's baby, I tell you!

* * *

AT THAT time, by the way, you would have guessed correctly that something was cooking when Tessie Sy Coson herself moved from BDO to EPCIB.

The SM group owns the majority of BDO. In EPCIB, it only owns about 24 percent.

Yet, Tessie Sy Coson thought it wise to focus her business expertise on something that the Sy family owned only a small portion of.

It did not make sense, unless she was up to something.

* * *

ANYWAY, the Cebuano boss of GSIS, Garcia himself, did not like the SM group scheme. He started to look for buyers and, reportedly, got a P95 a share offer.

He then invited the SM group to join the GSIS in the deal. It was actually an alternative to the SM group's "merger" offer.

Reportedly, Tessie Sy Coson is entertaining the GSIS proposal, but then again, she lays down those conditions.

Now, in financial markets, they have this thing called "open quote." This requires you to post a certain price—just one price—both ways, either selling or buying. It means that if you are selling something at P95, you should also buy the same thing at the same price, no questions asked.

It's one of the beauties of the free market. It is, in a word, FAIR.

And so here we have the SM group, willing to sell at P95 a share, cash, and no due diligence.

In comparison, it is offering to pay for the EPCIB shares of the SSS and the GSIS with, well, "certificates" (i.e. NOT cash), and at a much lower price.

Methinks that, through her own words as told to media, Tessie Sy Coson already shot dead the BDO "merger" (i.e. takeover") proposal.

How can anybody in the SSS, which is the staunchest ally of Tessie Sy Coson in the EPCIB takeover, now justify it to the members?

Look, the SM group stands to make P8 billion—CASH. And what, in comparison, will the SSS members get from the SM group—pieces of paper?

* * *

There is no doubt now that Garcia is going to town with his P95 a share pricing.

Yesterday, in fact, the SSS commission en banc (minus of course the well-travelled SSS president and CEO Corazon de la Paz) was ready to decide to accept Garcia's attractive offer.

De la Paz, you see, made the SSS study the SM group "merger" proposal.

But now, events have overtaken the SM group proposal. For instance, the market price of EPCIB shares is already P77 per, while Garcia has a buyer for P95 per.

The SM group "takeover" plan is dead. Unless of course the two "godfathers" of the SM group in this cute administration of Gloriaetta can still force the deal upon the SSS and the GSIS. You know—just brazenly!

Bear ...

From page B1

crease in investments this year would hinge partly on the government's ability to realize its target improvement in the country's infrastructure.

The Department of Finance hopes to raise P75 billion in additional revenues from the VAT Reform Law, which raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent and expanded the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity. Under the fiscal program, 30 percent of the P75 billion would be allocated for infrastructure.

Bear Stearns said the Philippines might not yet get an upgrade in its credit rating this year, as rating agencies wanted to see first whether the government could actually realize its target revenues generated from the tax measure.

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AFFIDAVIT OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that Fleet Management Services Philippines, Inc. Stock Certificate Nos. 1 and 7 for 7,497 and 1,250 shares respectively, in the name of Atty. A.B.F. Gaviola, Jr.; 8 for 1,250 shares in the name of Ms. Ma. Corazon D. Cruz and 9 for 1 share in the name of Ms. Jeannette T. Tumbali were reported lost, per their affidavits on file.

Anyone who may have claims against the above may notify the office.

If no claims are presented within 1 year from the last date of publication, replacement certificates therefor will be issued.

Manila, February 16, 2006.

(Sgd.) **MARIE JOSEPHINE C. SUAREZ**
Corporate Secretary

(PDI–March 9, 16 & 23, 2006)

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Seminar fee is just PhP500.00. Inclusive of: Buffet lunch, morning & afternoon snacks, and a 6-month subscription to PC Magazine.

Selected participants shall be contacted prior to the event and shall be given instructions on how to forward payments. Once payment is received, the selected participants shall be given CONFIRMATION CODES Only interested parties with confirmation codes shall be accepted into the seminars.

Due to limited slots, PC Magazine reserves the right to pre-select the participants for the above seminars

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 22, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	1,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36	36	35.5	36	196,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	63.5	63.5	62.5	63	901,500
China Banking Corp.	685	685	680	680	2,620
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	500
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.38	0.38	11,910,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	77.5	77.5	76.5	77.5	276,600
International Exch. Bank	27.5	28	27.5	28	239,200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	37.5	38	37.5	38	515,400
Philippine National Bank	32.5	32.5	32.5	32.5	16,100
Phil. Savings Bank	35	35	35	35	1,700
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13	13	13	13	27,000
Security Bank Corp.	38.5	39	38.5	39	341,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	36	36	36	36	11,000
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
ATR Kimeng Fin. Corp.	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	20,000
Bankard Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	23.75	24	23.5	24	7,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	3210	3210	3210	3210	140
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2150	2150	2150	2150	500
Ivantage Corp.	0.81	0.83	0.81	0.83	11,020,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	41	42	41	41	848,500
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	43	43	42	43	325,500
Manila Electric Co. A	13	13	13	13	34,800
Manila Electric Co. B	19.75	20.5	19.75	20.25	307,500
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.5	4,394,000
Petron Corp.	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.55	5,124,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.9	0.91	0.9	0.91	410,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.55	3.55	3.55	3.55	17,000
CADP Group Corp.	1.4	1.62	1.3	1.62	101,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	19	19	19	19	4,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	38	38	37.5	38	159,100
Pancake House Inc.	3.7	3.75	3.7	3.75	35,000
RFM Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	70,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.94	2.16	1.94	2.12	3,403,000
San Miguel Corp. A	60	60.5	60	60.5	122,000
San Miguel Corp. B	80.5	81	80	81	285,200
Phil Tob Flue Cur & Redry	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,200
Universal Robina Corp.	17.75	18	17.5	17.75	6,118,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	580,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	4,770,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.32	1.48	1.32	1.48	21,001,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.2	4.25	4.2	4.25	2,658,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	20,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	200,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.46	0.52	0.46	0.52	2,320,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	56,000,000
Ayala Corp.	350	352.5	347.5	352.5	334,710
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	100,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5	5.1	5	5.1	2,655,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	13,100,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.42	2.46	2.42	2.44	803,000
APC Group Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	10,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	1,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.86	0.88	0.86	0.88	650,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	75,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1	1	0.99	0.99	6,980,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	792,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3	3.1	2.9	2.95	2,762,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.3	1,106,000
JG Summit Holdings Inc.	5.5	5.8	5.5	5.6	4,538,000
Medco Holdings	0.22	0.26	0.22	0.26	130,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.25	0.27	1,400,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	19,700,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.26	0.27	0.25	0.26	9,510,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.9	0.92	0.9	0.92	70,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	200,000
SM Investments Corp.	224	226	224	226	59,580
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	3,600,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.125	0.125	4,310,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	11	11	10.75	11	2,971,600
Belle Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.04	1.04	3,210,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	1,540,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.24	0.245	0.24	0.245	3,780,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.86	1.9	1.84	1.9	6,652,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.58	1.7	1.58	1.6	104,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	60,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	3,000,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.21	0.21	350,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.51	0.52	6,140,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.027	0.028	0.026	0.028	4,000,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	230,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.24	1.26	1.24	1.26	2,659,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	3	3	2.9	2.9	75,000
Interport Res.	0.0042	0.0044	0.0042	0.0044	17,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	19,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.21	0.215	0.21	0.215	1,260,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.5	0.51	1,130,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	2,000,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	1,200,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.44	1.46	1,490,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	6,490,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.28	0.31	0.27	0.3	28,880,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	6.9	7.6	6.9	7.5	1,565,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.29	0.33	0.28	0.33	20,470,000
SM Development Corp.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	221,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8	8	7.9	7.9	2,284,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.145	0.15	0.145	0.15	13,440,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	13,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.92	0.92	0.91	0.91	1,350,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	900	900	890	890	21,970
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.1	3.1	2.95	3	3,033,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1860	1870	1855	1870	53,070
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.19	0.19	11,080,000
Ionics Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	21,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.049	0.05	0.049	0.05	2,300,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	13,000
Philweb Corp.	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	15,000,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.92	1.94	1.92	1.94	520,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	11.75	11.75	11.5	11.5	378,100
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	110,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	100,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	744,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.88	1.88	1.84	1.84	4,294,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3	3	3	60,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	900,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.4	0.4	770,000
EDUCATION					
Far Eastern University	600	610	600	610	1,300
Ipeople Inc.	3.1	3.15	3.1	3.15	42,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.58	1.6	64,000
Paxys Inc.	8.3	8.6	8.3	8.6	653,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	300,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.04	1.18	1.04	1.12	3,115,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.22	1.34	1.2	1.3	873,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	16,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.9	885,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.225	0.225	0.215	0.215	7,740,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.27	0.27	10,200,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	11,600,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	20,500,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.005	0.0055	59,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	2.22	2.26	2.18	2.26	9,920,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	2.36	2.36	2.3	2.34	8,693,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	25	25	24.5	24.75	253,700
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.29	1,180,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	100,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	690,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	175,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.009	71,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	300,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.75	3.8	126,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	3,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,000
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,800
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	12.5	13	12.5	12.75	166,000

CURRENCIES

March 22, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.826925	1.000000	51.0940
Japan	Yen	0.007052	0.008528	0.4357
United Kingdom	Pound	1.445134	1.747600	89.2919
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.106573	0.128879	6.5849
Switzerland	Franc	0.635411	0.768403	39.2608
Canada	Dollar	0.710843	0.859623	43.9216
Singapore	Dollar	0.511363	0.618391	31.5961
Australia	Dollar	0.592014	0.715922	36.5793
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.194307	2.653576	135.5818
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.220484	0.266631	13.6232
Brunei	Dollar	0.509787	0.616485	31.4987
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000091	0.000110	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.021293	0.025750	1.3157
UAE	Dirham	0.225167	0.272294	13.9126
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.209300	61.7880
Argentina	Peso	0.268918	0.325203	16.6159
Brazil	Real	0.382836	0.462963	23.6546
Denmark	Kroner	0.134011	0.162059	8.2802
India	Rupee	0.018670	0.022578	1.1536
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.223796	0.270636	13.8279
Mexico	New Peso	0.076246	0.092204	4.7111
New Zealand	Dollar	0.514929	0.622704	31.8164
Norway	Kroner	0.125804	0.152135	7.7732
South Africa	Rand	0.130617	0.157955	8.0706
Korea	Won	0.000854	0.001033	0.0528
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025479	0.030812	1.5743
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000385	0.000466	0.0238

Malampaya oil project seen to start soon

Terms of service, tripartite deal signed

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, Philippine National Oil Co. and the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power project consortium have signed two pacts that will pave the way for the development of the Malampaya oil rim.

The first, which is between the DOE and PNOC, involves the terms of service for the re-appraisal and development of and production from the oil rim.

Under the terms of service, PNOC may partner with third-party entities for the re-appraisal, development of and crude production from the Malampaya reservoir.

The state firm or its subsidiary, PNOC Exploration Corp., together with the third-party will start re-appraisal operations on the oil rim within six months from the signing of the terms of service.

Re-appraisal operations by means of geological, geophysical, geochemical and even drilling and well testing will be conducted to determine the commercial viability of the crude oil reserves in the rim.

If oil reserves in the rim would be of commercial quantity, the development and production period will begin within 60 days before the end of the re-appraisal period.

Also, the DOE, PNOC and the Malampaya consortium inked a tripartite agreement aimed at ensuring that the development of the oil rim would not endanger the Malampaya gas reservoir.

The agreement specifies a "production and operating zone" for activities to be carried out under the terms of service for the oil leg.

A "no-entry zone" is defined under the agreement to protect the existing infrastructure installed and operated by the Service Contract 38 consortium.

The agreement also prescribes indemnity and insurance arrangements for the protection of the natural gas operations. To ensure that gas and oil production will proceed safely, the DOE will form and lead an oversight and coordinating committee.

The terms of the services and the tripartite agreement were signed in compliance with Executive Order No. 473 issued by Malacañang to facilitate the "immediate exploration, development and production of crude oil" from the Malampaya oil rim.

Coconut exports rose 60% in January

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE VOLUME OF COCONUT-based products shipped out of the country in January jumped 59.5 percent to 179,000 metric tons in copra equivalent.

Preliminary data from the United Coconut Associations of the Philippines showed that the January shipment was much higher than the 112,000 MT of coconut products exported in January 2005.

UCAP said all major coconut-based products, except desiccated coconut, posted substantial growth. Coconut oil shipments grew by 69.3 percent; copra meal, 96 percent, and oleochemicals, 125.1 percent.

The group said coconut oil export volume climbed to 97,751 MT; copra meal to 38,249 MT, and oleochemicals to 13,985 MT in copra equivalent.

However, desiccated coconut exports during the period dropped 31.4 percent to 6,349 MT from 9,259 MT.

The European market accounted for 64,413 MT or 65.9 percent of the country's total coconut oil export for the month while the United States got 16,377 MT or 16.8 percent.

The Philippines is the US' leading source of lauric oil imports. It bought from the Philippines 299,863 MT of coconut oil in 2005. This meant the country accounted for 71 percent of the US' coconut oil imports and 46 percent of its total imports of oils that produce lauric acid.

Lauric oils such as coconut oil and palm kernel oil are used in the production of confectioner fats, ice cream, soaps and oleochemical products.

In the meantime, South Korea remained the top market for copra meal, accounting for 17,638 MT or 46.1 of exports in January.

Vietnam took a third of the Philippine copra meal shipments or 12,911 MT, while New Zealand had a fifth or 7,700 MT.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) and classified, at least, as Category C&D / IAC Small Sub-Category B for General Engineering or General Building to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project

CONSTRUCTION OF THE LEYTE GEOTHERMAL PRODUCTION FIELD (LGPF) PAD 405 AND PAD 407 PIPE TRENCHES
EDC 06-021

The Approved Budget is P4,287,910.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 120 calendar days.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured form the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o N A Nicolasora) starting **March 23, 2006** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Five Hundred Pesos (Php 500.00).

Site inspection shall be conducted on **April 21, 2006, 10 A.M.** at the Leyte Geothermal Production Field (LGPF). For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **April 25, 2006, 10:00 A.M.** at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor Building 5, PNOC-EDC, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila.

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor Building 5, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila, **not later than 2:00 p.m. on May 4, 2006** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to abort the bidding process, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC Chairman

(PDI-March 23, 2006)

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BDO completes integration of UOB branches

By Doris C. Dumlao

BANCO DE ORO UNIVERSAL BANK HAS completed the integration of the local branches of Singapore-based United Overseas Bank into its network.

The move brought BDO's branch network to 220, the bank told the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday.

Of the 66 branches acquired from UOB, 31 were converted into BDO branches, four were relocated, and 31 were consolidated into existing BDO branches.

BDO, the country's seventh biggest bank with assets of P197 billion as of end-2005, plans to redeploy the 31 unused branch licenses in other strategic areas in the country. This will eventually increase its network to 251 branches.

BDO signed an agreement with UOB Philippines to acquire the latter's branch banking business in May 2005.

"Both institutions intend to explore means to expand this partnership, particularly in the areas of trade finance, consumer lending and private banking in the Philippines as well as in the region," BDO said.

"The integration process, which commenced in Dec. 19, 2005, took less than three months to complete," the bank said.

In exchange for the branches turned over to BDO, UOB will get a 2.3-percent stake and one board seat in BDO to pilot-test a potential strategic partnership.

BDO earlier issued by way of private placement about 22.43 million common shares to UOB Philippines for P22.75 per share.

The local bank took over all but one of UOB's branches and about P11 billion worth of deposit liabilities but did not assume any of its non-performing assets.

DOTC drops bid . . .

From page B1

dizes up to 48 percent of the cost of ferrying a commuter from an originating station to the destination.

For the MRT system to be profitable, he said that the maximum fare for each passenger commuting from end-to-end would be approximately P72.

Mamondiong said that even if fares were hiked by P10, "we would still be losing money."

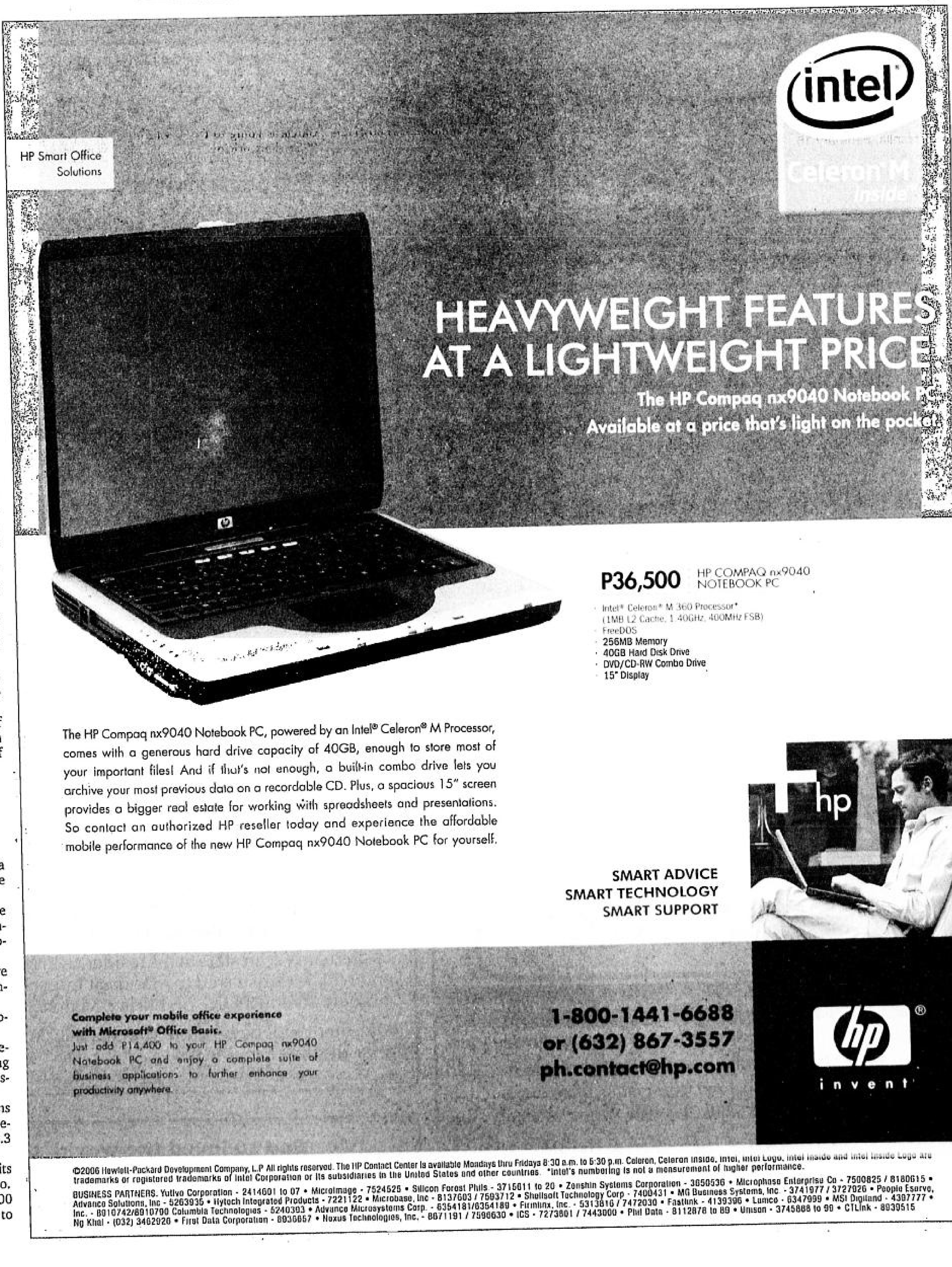
"It will just reduce the [government's] subsidy," he said.

Mamondiong said the DOTC will try to petition for another fare hike next year, assuring that a fare increase this year is out of the question.

At present, revenues from MRT operations are insufficient to cover its rental and maintenance. Monthly rental fees amount to $3.3 million for the MRT system.

MRT also owes about P500 million to its Japanese maintenance contractor Sumitomo.

Its 20 trains ferry an average of 460,000 passengers daily, and ridership is expected to hit as much as 600,000 by yearend.



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BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS
In Compliance with RA 7041

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

1. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OFFICER I – Item No. OMBA HRMOI-2-1998; SG11
Education : Bachelor's degree; Experience: None required; Training: None required; Eligibility: Career Service Professional / Second Level Eligibility

2. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANT - Item No. OMBA HRMAS-3-1998; SG8
Education: Completion of two years studies in college; Experience: 1 year of relevant experience; Training: 4 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: Career Service Subprofessional / First Level Eligibility

Applicants should submit within ten (10) calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for;
2) Duty accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1" x 1" picture (colored);
4) * Bar/Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility;
5) * Transcript of Records;
6) Certificates of Seminars / Training attended;
7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable);
8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only);
9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

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ACCOUNTANT II – CPA, with 1 year financial and accounting work experience w/ 4 hours of relevant training/seminar.

NURSE – Nursing Board Passer; w/ 1 year of relevant experience; w/ 4 hours of relevant training/seminar.

ENTERPRISE SERVICES OFFICERS – Bachelor's degree holder with CS Professional Eligibility.

DATA ENCODER II - Bachelor's degree holder w/ 1 year of relevant experience; w/ 4 hours of relevant training/seminar; w/ CS Professional Eligibility.

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Republic of the Philippines
Securities and Exchange Commission
Metro Manila
IN THE MATTER OF THE
REGISTRATION OF SECURITIES
LEXBER INCORPORATED
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that on October 20, 2003, an amended registration statement was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission for and on behalf of LEXBER INCORPORATED to cover an additional 1,020 Non-Proprietary Timeshares of Regal Lexber Vacation Homes (the Project) with an offer price enumerated as follows:

Number of Shares Offered	Unit Type	Offering Price
500	Bernadette Type 3 Studio Red	P 305,882.00
250	Bernadette Type 3 Studio White	235,294.00
280	Bernadette Type 3 Studio Blue	158,824.00

The total estimated gross proceeds from the offering amount to Two Hundred Fifty Five Million Four Hundred Eleven Thousand Six Hundred Eighty Pesos (P255,411,880.00).

According to the papers presented, the following persons are the officers/directors of the corporation:

NAME	POSITION
Alejandro G. Cruz-Herrera	Chairman and CEO
Bernardita R. Cruz-Herrera	Director & Corp. Secretary
Elpidio Y. Custodio	Director/Asst. Corp. Secretary
Manuel R. Tolome	Director/Assistant Treasurer
Alexis R. Cruz-Herrera	Principal Operating Officer/ Comptroller
Roderick P. Baybayan	Principal Accounting Officer
Anita L. Macuto	Principal Treasury Officer

Said registration statement and other papers/documents attached thereto are open to inspection by interested parties during business hours, and copies thereof, photostatic or otherwise, shall be furnished to every party at such reasonable fees as the Commission may prescribe.

JUSTINA F. CALLANGAN
Director

(PDI – March 23 & 27, 2006)

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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Social Welfare and Development
Field Office VI, M.H. del Pilar St., Molo, Iloilo City
Tel. No. (033) 336-54-25 Fax No. (033) 336-54-28
Email: fo6@dswd.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The Department of Social Welfare and Development through GOP-PDAF-2006-06-10 intends to apply the sum of **Eight Million Pesos (8,000,000.00)** being the **Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)** to payments under the contract for the **SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF VARIOUS SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS FOR PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS IN THE 4th DISTRICT OF ILOILO.** Bids in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.
2. The Department of Social Welfare and Development, through its Bids and Awards Committee now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the Supply and Delivery of Various School Supplies and Materials for Public Elementary and High School pupils. Delivery of the GOODS is required by **May 15-26, 2006** during office hours at DSWD Field Office VI, M.H. del Pilar St., Molo, Iloilo City. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine the responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the Department of Social Welfare and Development Field Office VI and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

   BAC Secretariat, Supply Unit
   DSWD Field Office VI, M.H. del Pilar St., Molo, Iloilo City
   Tel. No. (033) 3365425, (033) 3365426
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of **Two Thousand Five Hundred Pesos Only (Php2,500.00)**. The method of payment will be in the form of **Cash**. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his duly authorized representative.
6. The Department of Social Welfare and Development Field Office VI will hold a **Pre-Bid Conference** open to all interested parties on **March 23, 2005, 10:00 a.m.** at the DSWD Conference/Training Center, M.H. del Pilar St., Molo, Iloilo City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before **April 4, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of:
   a. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit (1% of Php 8,000,000.00 or Php 80,000.00)
   b. Bank Guarantee (1.5% of Php 8,000,000.00 or Php 120,000.00)
   c. Surety Bond (2.5% of Php 8,000,000.00 or Php 200,000.00)

   or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. **Late Bids shall not be accepted.**
8. Bid opening shall be on April 4, 2006 at 2:00 pm at the DSWD Conference/Training Center, M.H. del Pilar St., Molo, Iloilo City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

   DSWD Conference/Training Center
   M.H. del Pilar St., Molo, Iloilo City
   Tel. No. (033) 3365425, (033) 3365426

(Sgd.) JOEL P. GALICIA
OIC – Assistant Regional Director &
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–March 16 & 23, 2006)

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Tindahan Natin outlets open in NE

ABOUT 400 FAMILIES from Sitio Pinaltakan, Barangay Caballero and Barangay Militar, Fort Magsaysay in Palayan City, Nueva Ecija will now have access to low-priced NFA rice and noodles as three more Tindahan Natin outlets were accredited in their respective barangays recently. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo personally awarded the certificate to operate to the two Tindahan Natin operators during her visit in the province to inaugurate the housing project for soldiers under the administration's Pangkabuhayang Gawad sa Makabagong Army program. The project is jointly implemented by the National Food Authority, Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Local Government Units with the support of non-government and people's organizations.

OBITUARIES

CAPT. TEOFILO TUMACAY CALIMAG, JR.

Retired Philippine Airlines Boeing 747-400 Captain Of Tuguegarao, Cagayan.

Peacefully joined his Creator on March 22, 2006.

His bereaved wife **Iderlina**;
children **Jerry & Elaine, Peter, Jojo & Jean**;
grandchildren **Ma. Katrina, Anna Patricia, Kevin Matthew, Sofia Andrea & Niccolo Angelo**;
relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at **Our Lady of Mount Carmel Shrine Parish, Mt. Carmel Chapel, Doña Juana Rodriguez Ave., New Manila, Quezon City.**

Interment will be announced.

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OUR MOST BELOVED FATHER

PERCIVAL B. PADUA

"PERCY"

Pencefully joined our Creator on March 19, 2006 at the age of 74.

His wife **TITA NAVAL PADUA**, children & grandchildren will forever remember his intelligence, sense of humor, tenderness & love for what life could offer.

His remains lie at #20 Union St., San Jose, Navotas.

Interment will take place at the Immaculate Garden Memorial Park, Navotas after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at San Jose Parish Church.

Contact Person: Aboy 2839214
Ricky 2824222

PMAP, University of Makati partner for Certificate in Labor Relations

THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANagement Development Center (HRMDC) of the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) partners with University of Makati in holding a certificate course in Compensation Management to equip the participants with the relevant knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the exercise of the human resource development functions. PMAP and the faculty of University of Makati designed the Certificate in Labor Relations (CLR) course, which will run for eight Saturdays starting May 13 to July 1, 2006 at the Graduate School Building of University of Makati in West Rembo, Makati City. The CCM course is part of PMAP's Diploma in Human Resource Management (DHRM) program. Completion of five PMAP certificate courses merits a post-graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management. The other certificate courses are Certificate in Human Resource Planning and Acquisition (formerly Recruitment-Selection Placement), Certificate in Organization Development, Certificate in Compensation Management, and Certificate in Human Resource Management (CHRD). For other information, PMAP may be contacted thru telephone numbers 726-1532/81/88.

OBITUARIES

FILEMON S. PADIERNOS

of Gapan, Nueva Ecija
Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on March 21, 2006 at the age of 75.

His loving wife, **FRANCISCA**; children **Ray & Jona, Roy & Ruth, Gay & Janette, May & Arnold, Joy & Carlos**; grandchildren, brother and sisters, nephews, nieces, other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at his residence in Mangino, Gapan, Nueva Ecija and will be transferred to Manila at Imperial Chapel, La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Q.C. on Friday, March 24, 2006 at 12:00 noon.

Interment will be held on March 25, 2006, 10:30 a.m. at Heritage Park after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

> **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."** John 3:16

Bottom up approach to peace

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

PEACE AND ORDER CONDITION AND ECOnomic development are closely intertwined. One is indispensable to the other. Economic development can be pursued only within a peaceful environment. When the economy is doing good, there is a better chance of a peaceful environment. And this is particularly true in Mindanao.

This is not to simplify the complex issues of peace and development in Mindanao. These issues have socio-political and cultural roots. However, history and reality tell us that economics is also an important factor.

That is why the government, business and nongovernment organizations have always put peace on top of their economic development agenda. Peace and development have always been a main topic in the various conferences. These include the annual summits initiated by Kusog Mindanaw, Mindanao Commission of Women, NGOs, business groups and media. These initiatives manifest the acknowledgment by the various stakeholders in Mindanao that peace and development must go together.

Various foreign donors have also signified intention to continue supporting peace and development initiatives in Mindanao, including livelihood projects particularly for disadvantaged sectors.

Recently, the 4th Bangsamoro Summit was held in Sulu. Organized by the Province of Sulu, in collaboration with the Mindanao People's Peace Movement, the summit gathered about 50 participants from various sectors of the tri-people community at the Tabang Sulu Hall in an effort to contribute to efforts to forge lasting peace and development in Mindanao.

The summit consolidated insights of various sectors on peace building initiatives in the region and served as a forum to assess the livelihood programs initiated for former combatants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Although there are many other summits initiated by different sectors, it is good to have summits especially organized for the tri-people. There is no better substitute to touching base with and getting the pulse of the people in the communities who know best how to properly address their concerns.

The results of the 4th Bangsamoro Summit should serve as an important reference to other sectors and organizations who hold periodic conferences and consultations. While the summit may be area- and sector-specific, the approaches and strategies employed in successfully implementing livelihood programs in the Moro communities may help other organizations in enhancing their programs to dovetail with the needs of the target beneficiaries.

Again, there is no substitute to touching base. There is no such thing as conclusive assumptions and presumptions in working for peace and development in Mindanao. No one knows better than the people in the communities themselves.

(Joji Ilagan Bian is an advocate for Mindanao; chair of Mindanaworld Foundation and Joji Ilagan Foundation; commissioner, Charter-change Advocacy Commission, and Mindanao representative, Export Development Council. Email comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)

2-mo additional revenue from VAT short of target

DOF expects collection to improve

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVenue failed to meet its revenue target for the first two months of the year from the Value Added Tax Reform Law, which raised the VAT rate to 12 percent and lifted the exemption of oil and electricity.

The BIR has collected in the first two months of the year P2.95 billion in incremental revenue from VAT. This, however, fell short of the BIR's P4.47-billion target.

The Arroyo administration fought hard to get the tax measure approved in Congress, saying it would play a big role in achieving the government's medium-term goal of wiping out its budget deficit by 2008.

But the BIR had a rough start this year, collecting only P780 million incremental revenue in January. This was way off the P2.87-billion target set for the month.

Its incremental VAT collection rose in February to P2.17 billion, higher than the P1.6-billion goal for the month. The February collection was not enough to cover the huge shortfall in January.

Finance officials expressed confidence that the revenue collection of the BIR would increase in the coming months.

The Department of Finance, head agency of the BIR, had set a target of reducing the budget deficit to P125 billion this year from P146.5 billion last year. This, the DOF said, took into consideration the projection that the VAT Reform Law would yield P75 billion in additional revenue for the whole year.

According to the fiscal program for this year, P52.6 billion of the total incremental revenue to be raised by the government from the VAT law should come from the BIR. The remaining amount is expected to come from the Bureau of Customs.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves earlier said the DOF had directed the BIR to implement several administrative measures to plug VAT leakages which, if not addressed, would defeat the purpose of increasing the VAT rate and expanding its coverage.

Economic managers last year admitted that the tax measure would put pressure on inflation in 2006, although the National Economic and Development Authority said the peso strengthening had been tempering the inflationary impact of the VAT law implementation.

SBMA offers airlines up to 80% discount

THE SUBIC METROPOLITAN AUTHORity yesterday said it was offering up to 80-percent discount on aeronautical fees to attract more airline operators.

Armand C. Arreza, SBMA chief administrator, said airline operators using the freeport's facilities would now enjoy a discount on operational fees of 80 percent on weekdays and 60 percent on weekends.

The fees cover the landing and take off, parking, lighting and other charges like those for the use of navigational equipment and radar.

"We are doing this to attract more airlines to come and use the Subic Bay International Airport," he said.

Carriers using SBIA include Inter-Island Airlines which offers chartered flights to Manila and Taiwan; Mandarin Air with flights to and from Taiwan; Cebu Pacific with flights from Incheon in South Korea; Air Philippines with flights to and from Hong Kong.

Ronnel W. Domingo

Consumers ask Napocor to match rates of Meralco IPPs

A NORTHERN LUZON-BASED CONSUMER group recently urged the National Power Corp. to match the lower rates charged by independent power producers of distribution utility Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) "to give countryside consumers respite from rising electricity costs."

The Timpuyog Mannalon Amianan aired the call following the reduction of Meralco generation charges by some 8.23 centavos per kilowatt-hour last month resulting from increased purchase of power by the Lopez-owned firm from its IPPs and reduced off-take from Napocor.

Meralco earlier reported that higher dispatch by its IPPs in February reduced overall generation costs and the associated transmission charges. Meralco also said power from its IPPs are cheaper by 68.35 centavos per kilowatt hour than power sourced from Napocor.

On the other hand, generation cost for Napocor-supplied power is higher by 21 centavos per kwh, and transmission cost more expensive by 47.3 centavos per kwh compared to power supplied by Meralco IPPs. Overall, Meralco IPP-supplied power is cheaper by 68.4 centavos.

The group warned that more expensive Napocor generation rates "could be responsible for the slow growth of commerce and industries in the countryside."

She noted that the higher rates charged by Napocor are "puzzling, given that the generators of the state-owned firm are older and therefore must have been erected at lower cost than more recent generators."

GOINGS-ON

SGS' ISO 22000 seal

SGS PHILIPPINES INC., THE LOCAL AFFILIATE of Switzerland-based SGS, has launched the ISO 22000 certification program.

The program was introduced in a series of forums in March which were attended by more than 200 executives and managers representing more than 70 companies from various businesses. Held simultaneously in Davao and Cebu, and most recently in Metro Manila, each five-hour forum included an overview of the ISO 22000 certification program as well as presentations on how this certification process complements other management standard systems.

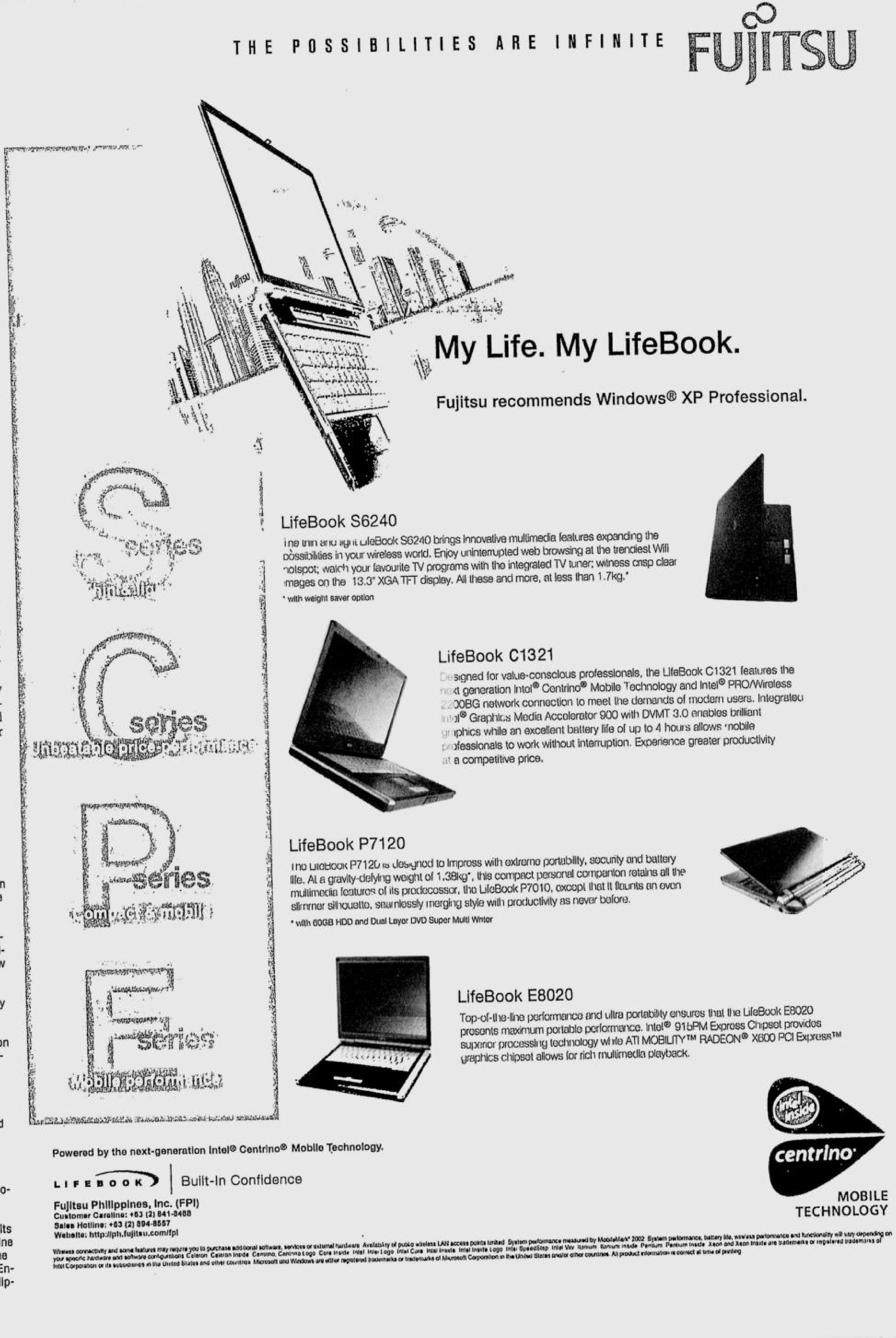
Formally known as the ISO 22000 Food Safety Management Systems, ISO 22000 is the new global food safety management standard from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) that incorporates all the elements of previous certification programs.

Globe supports SMEs

GLOBE TELECOM supported the recently concluded Go Negosyo Entrepreneurship Expo held at the Market! Market! in Fort Bonifacio Global City.

At the two-day expo, Globe presented the many connectivity services it was offering to small and medium enterprises (SME) and corporate markets. These include Globelines Broadband of Innove Communications.

Globe puts together Globelines Broadband, its wireless service Globe Handyphone, and wireline connectivity Globelines into one package for the SMEs and corporate clients. The Go Negosyo Entrepreneurship Expo was organized by the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship.



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Counterfeit dollar notes in RP alarm US

Top quality 'supernotes' fool banks

By Doris C. Dumlao

AN OFFICIAL OF THE UNITED STATES GOVernment yesterday raised his grave concern over the smuggling into the Philippines of high-quality counterfeit US dollars or "supernotes" that fool even banks.

In a roundtable discussion conducted by the US Treasury, US Secret Service Regional Officer William Chan said US dollar counterfeiting in the Philippines was "relatively higher" than in other markets like Guam, Papua New Guinea and Marianas Islands, although it was not the highest in Asia.

Chan agreed that the strong inflows of foreign currency from the country's huge pool of migrant workers could be one reason why the Philippines was vulnerable to the proliferation of fake US dollars.

He said it was serious enough a problem for his office to beef up its local surveillance of US dollar counterfeiting activities.

In 2005, the US and Philippine governments estimated that local banks had unwittingly accepted at least $15,000 worth of US dollar bills later discovered to be fake in Hong Kong, where US dollars circulated in the Philippines are being cleared.

"It's not a large amount, but it's not small either," Chan said.

He noted that the smugglers of those fake dollars would not bring their bills for conversion at the stores.

Instead, the fake bills would be brought mostly to banks and even to casinos where gamblers would exchange the dollars for pesos.

Chan added the US was also concerned over the production of fake US dollars in southern Philippines.

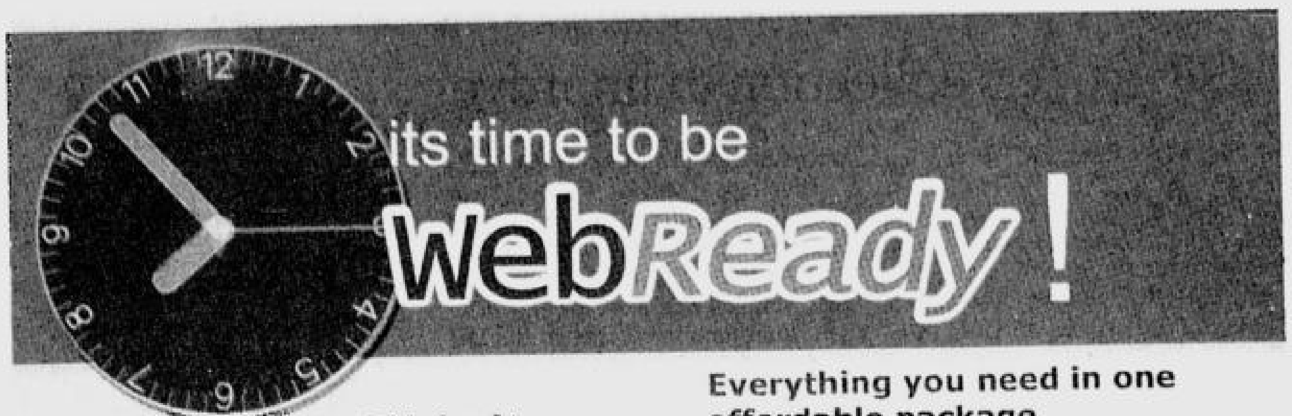
But he noted that the fake notes manufactured locally, unlike those shipped from abroad, could be easily detected due to their inferior quality.

Chan said a similar problem exists in Indonesia and Thailand.

Maja Gracia Malic, representing the currency analysis and redemption division of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, said most of local banks had likely been hit by fake US dollars. But she assured that the BSP was now conducting more rigorous training for banks to better detect fake US dollar bills.

Noel Delos Reyes, chief of the Philippine National Police's Anti-Fraud and Commercial Crimes Division, said the government was now investigating the channels were counterfeit US dollars pass through.

Ross Bautista, Executive Officer for Operations and Investigation of the National Bureau of Investigation, said counterfeiting in the Philippines mostly involved $100 bills.



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Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Ombudsman Building, Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

OFFICE ORDER NO. 05-303
Series of 2005
TO ALL CONCERNED
SUBJECT CUSTOMIZED CODE OF CONDUCT FOR OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN INVOLVED IN THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS
DATE . OCTOBER 20, 2005

I. PURPOSE

Procurement involves disbursement of public funds or funds placed under its official custody and the basic rule is that such funds should be properly spent by the Office. If the procurement is well managed by those involved in the procurement process, then, corruption and wastage of resources are avoided.

The Office of the Ombudsman is committed to the principle of good governance and it has exerted efforts to adhere to the principle of transparency, accountability, equity, efficiency, competitiveness and economy in the conduct of its procurement of Goods (all items, supplies, materials, equipment and general services) and Consulting Services and in contracting Infrastructure Projects. To ensure the integrity of the procurement process in the Office, it is essential to establish a customized Code of Conduct for all its officials and employees involved in the procurement process.

II. SCOPE

This customized Code of Conduct shall apply to all officials and employees of the Office who are involved in the procurement process, namely: the BAC, the TWG, the TIG, the BAC secretariat, the PMS / GSD, the FMS, the Accounting Division, the Planning and Budget Division, the Cashiering Unit, the Officials who are signatories to the Contracts / Agreements and the respective end-users.

III. POLICIES AND RULES

Section 1. Definition of Terms

As used herein, the term:

1.a Procurement – refers to the acquisition of Goods and Consulting Services, and the contracting for Infrastructure Projects by the Office of the Ombudsman.
1.b Goods – refer to all items, supplies, materials, equipment and general support services.
1.c Consulting Services – refer to services for Infrastructure Projects and other types of projects or activities of Government requiring adequate external technical and professional expertise including advisory and review services, pre-investment or feasibility studies, design, construction supervision, management and related services, and other technical services or special studies.
1.d Infrastructure Projects / Civil Works – include the construction, improvement, rehabilitation, demolition, repair restoration or maintenance of roads and bridges, railways, airports, seaports, communication facilities, civil works components of information technology projects, irrigation, flood control and drainage, water supply, sanitation, sewerage & solid waste management systems, shore protection, energy / power and electrification facilities, national buildings, school buildings, hospital buildings and other related construction projects of the government.
1.e Code – refers to the customized Code of Conduct for the Office of the Ombudsman BAC and the other Committees / Offices involved in procurement.
1.f Office – refers to the Office of the Ombudsman.
1.g Gift – refers to a thing disposed of gratuitously in favor of another, and shall include a simulated sale or a disposition onerous to the giver.
1.h Benefit – refers to a right, privilege, entertainment, exemption or any other similar act of liberality in favor of another.
1.i BAC Secretariat – refers to the members of the support staff to the Bids and Awards Committee and the custodians of the procurement records.
1.j Suppliers / Contractors – refer to persons or group of persons, or entities that supply Goods and Consulting Services and contract for Infrastructure Projects.
1.k BAC – Bids and Awards Committee
1.l TWG – Technical Working Group
1.m TIG – Technical Inspection Group
1.n PMS – Property Management Section
1.o GSD – General Services Division
1.p IRR-A – Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A
1.q COA – Commission on Audit
1.r NGO – Non-Government Organization
1.s PS-DBM – Procurement Service Department of Budget and Management
1.t FMS – Finance and Management Services
1.u End-user – refers to the officers and employees of the unit for which the Goods, Consulting Services and Infrastructure Projects are intended.
1.v Signatories to the Contract – refer to the Officials who execute and sign the contract / agreement for the Office.

Section 2. General Provisions

The Chairman and Members of the Ombudsman BAC, TWG, TIG, the BAC Secretariat, and the officials and employees of the PMS / GSD, FMS, Planning and Budget Division, Accounting Division, Cashiering Unit, and the signatories to the contract, while in the performance of their duties and responsibilities as such, shall:

2.a Adhere strictly to the principles and provisions of laws and rules promoting transparency, accountability, equity, efficiency, professionalism, competitiveness and economy in procurement.
2.b Strictly avoid all situations that may give rise or tend to give rise to situations of conflict of interests or suspicions of conflict of interests. Should a conflict of interest arise, pursuant to Rule V of OMB Office Order Number 05-13 dated January 24, 2005, on the Norms of Behavior for Officials and Employees of the Office of the Ombudsman, it shall be the duty of the concerned official or employee to immediately disclose the same to his/her immediate supervisor and terminate the same, by way of a written declaration hereof. The written declaration on conflict of interest may be done periodically or for every contracting process.
2.c Absolutely refrain from soliciting and/or accepting, directly or indirectly, gifts and benefits for themselves or for others, from the suppliers, contractors and/or consultants regardless of whether or not said suppliers, contractors and/or consultants are transacting business with the Office of the Ombudsman.
2.d Absolutely refrain from accepting invitations or offers from suppliers, contractors and/or consultants or their representatives for meetings and conferences outside the Office.
2.e Strictly refrain from having personal contacts or interactions with suppliers, contractors and/or consultants. The latter are not allowed to enter the office premises, unless necessary to transact official business in which case their stay shall not be longer than what is required to finish their official transaction.
2.f Strictly adhere to the mandated time frames as provided for in Republic Act No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.
2.g Refrain from unduly influencing or exerting, undue pressure upon any member of the BAC or any officer or employee of the procuring entity or office to take a particular action which favors, or tends to favor a particular supplier, contractor and/or consultant.
2.h Strictly refrain from inviting as guests and getting as ninongs, ninangs, sponsors or donors the suppliers / contractors and/or consultants transacting business with the Office to avoid closeness and familiarity as well as the perception that undue benefit and/or advantage is being given to the member concerned of the BAC, TWG, TIG, PMS/GSD, BAC Secretariat, FMS, Planning and Budget Division, Accounting Division, Cashiering Unit, as well as signatories to the contract.
2.i Strictly observe the norms of behavior enunciated under Office Order Number 05-13 dated January 24, 2005, particularly on the provisions relating to Conflict of Interests and Confidentiality of proceedings.

Section 3. Specific Provisions

3.1 For the Bids and Awards Committee –

The BAC, in the performance of its duties and responsibilities, shall:

3.1.a Only have official contacts with suppliers, contractors and/or consultants whenever necessary during the pre-bid conference and opening of bids.
3.1.b Refrain from entertaining procurement transactions/queries from suppliers, contractors and/or consultants except through the BAC Secretariat.
3.1.c Attend the regular meetings of the BAC as scheduled.

3.2 For the BAC Secretariat –

The BAC Secretariat, in the performance of its duties and responsibilities, shall:

3.2.a Only have official contacts with suppliers, contractors and/or consultants whenever necessary during the bidding process.
3.2.b Prepare the necessary report/s and proper recording of all procurement transactions to ensure accountability and transparency.
3.2.c Be under the direct control, supervision and monitoring of the BAC.

3.3 For theTechnical Working Group –

The TWG, in the performance of its duties and responsibilities, shall:

3.3.a Only have official contacts with the concerned suppliers, contractors and/or consultants whenever necessary during the pre-bid conference, the opening of bids, the evaluation and post qualification process, and before submission of the Evaluation Report.
3.3.b Conduct ocular inspections of the suppliers, contractors and/or consultants' business offices, premises, warehouses, outlets, stores and factories unannounced. The date of ocular inspection and the team to conduct the ocular inspection shall be specified by and with authority from the BAC for monitoring purposes. In no case shall the TWG use other resources than that of the Office in the conduct of ocular inspection
3.3.c Prepare a brief report for the BAC after every ocular inspection indicating the itinerary of travel and the expenses incurred. Claims for refund of expenses shall be properly documented and in compliance with the existing auditing and accounting rules and regulations.
3.3.d Prepare the Technical Evaluation Report and submit the same to the BAC within the prescribed period pursuant to RA No. 9184 and its IRR-A.

3.4 For the Technical Inspection Group –

The TIG, in the performance of its duties and responsibilities, shall:

3.4.a Only have official contact with the suppliers or contractors whenever necessary during the delivery and acceptance of the delivered goods or the evaluation of the performance of the general support services rendered to the office.
3.4.b Conduct inspections of deliveries of goods and evaluation of general support services rendered to the Office by the suppliers or contractors:
  - In the presence of the end-user, property custodian, and PMS Officer; and
  - By rotation on a per delivery and per evaluation bases.

3.4.c Strictly comply with the Office specification/s in the conduct of inspection of goods and the evaluation of the general support services rendered to the Office by the suppliers or contractors.

3.5 For the Property Management Section / General Services Division –

The PMS/GSD, in the performance of their duties and responsibilities, shall:

3.5.a Only have official contact with the concerned suppliers, contractors and/or consultants whenever necessary prior to the preparation of the Purchase Orders (PO), the Job Orders (JO) or Contracts/Agreements, during the delivery of goods or general support services, and during the preparation of documents for payments. The PMS/GSD shall, in case of sealed canvass, contact the suppliers or contractors whenever necessary if there is a need to get information on certain goods or general support services and in the conduct of market probe.
3.5.b Prepare report/s and keep the records on procurement transactions pursuant to COA rules for submission to the Overall Deputy Ombudsman.

3.6 For the Finance and Management Services, the Planning and Budget Division, the Accounting Division and the Cashiering Unit –

The FMS, the Planning and Budget Division, the Accounting Division and the Cashiering Unit, in the performance of their duties and responsibilities as such, shall:

3.6.a Expeditiously process payments of claims arising from procurement provided that the Notice of Cash Allocation has been released and all supporting documents are submitted by the concerned suppliers and the PMS/GSD.
3.6.b Accurately record all procurement transactions in the respective general and subsidiary ledgers.
3.6.c Periodically coordinate with PMS/GSD to reconcile any discrepancy in the inventory of goods.
3.6.d Properly coordinate with the concerned office/bureau to obtain the documents or information needed for the processing of claims for payments arising from procurement.

3.7 For the Signatories to the Contracts/Agreements –

The Officials of the Office who are authorized signatories to the contracts or agreements shall act within the prescribed period as provided for under Republic Act No. 9184 and its IRR-A.

3.8 For the End-Users –

The end-user shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

3.8.a Maintain and update records of goods received, consumed and/or disposed.
3.8.b Submit to the Overall Deputy Ombudsman or the BAC a report involving any discrepancy, irregularity, or defect in the procurement of goods involving their respective unit/bureau/ office using, among others, the End-User Feedback form.

Section 4. Accountability

All officials and employees involved in procurement shall strictly comply with the office requirements on authorized signatories and approving authorities. To strengthen accountability, a regular review of contracts as well as audits of procurement decisions shall be made by an independent Review Committee to be created for the purpose.

Section 5. Transparency

For transparency, officials and employees having custody of documents pertaining to procurement, which are not classified as confidential, shall make available for inspection the requested document upon written request by the interested party indicating the legal purpose, subject to prior approval of the Bids and Awards Committee. For this purpose, contract registers shall be maintained by the BAC which shall include among other things, data on the notice to bidders, product/service description, start and finish of contract, names and addresses of the participating bidders/parties involved, contract value, date of last audit conducted by the independent Review Committee and audit result, the names of all personnel involved in the procurement process.

IV. PENALTIES / SANCTIONS

Any violation of these Rules shall be a ground for disciplinary action, without prejudice to the filing of appropriate criminal charges against the erring official and/ or employee.

V. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

If any provision of this Code is held unconstitutional, other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid and binding.

VI. EFFECTIVITY

This Office Order shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette and upon the filing with the University of the Philippines Law Center of three (3) certified copies thereof, including its publication in a newspaper of general circulation for three (3) consecutive weeks.

MARGARITO P. GERVACIO, JR.
The Overall Deputy Ombudsman

(PDI – March 9, 16 & 23, 2006)

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LIFESTYLE
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso
sms feedback: Inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

MAGBAYAD NG TAMANG BUWIS
bago ang April 17 deadline.
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GIGANTIC siopao from Emerald Restaurant

Where to find the best 'siopao' plus recipes galore

I AM IN SEARCH OF THE BEST *siopao*. Would you know where I could get something different from the usual ones?

PILAR T.

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

As a matter of fact, I do! Just last week my dear student, Fe Ong, owner of the famous Emerald Restaurant, brought some of the best-tasting dim sum to class, including the gigantic Emerald *siopao* (one piece is equivalent to three of the large ones we are accustomed to). To my surprise, the Emerald siopao had everything: *bola-bola*, *asado*, *chorizo*, chicken! Aside from being delicious, it is great value at P60 a piece. Another thing you may want to try is *malay ko* (Chinese-style *puto*). I haven't tasted anything in Manila as good as theirs, and it is comparable to those you find in Hong Kong.

If you're having a party, Emerald can prepare dim sum especially for you and all you must do is pick it up! (The restaurant is on Roxas Boulevard.)

For orders, call 5238510/14, 5223457, 5214624/1170.

As promised, here are the recipes from my star apple-themed birthday dinner. Thanks to Uva and Embassy chef Fernando Aracama, my dearest friend, for sharing his mother's recipe for *inihaw na* spareribs and his delicious *inasal*. I sure hope you enjoy cooking and eating them as much as we enjoyed sharing them with you! Bon appetit!

Fernando Aracama's Inasal Manok

1 kg chicken

2 tbsp each soy sauce, vinegar, white sugar and garlic

½ tbsp sea salt

achuete oil (2-3 tbsp *achuete*, 1/3 c oil. Heat oil. When oil is hot, add *achuete* seeds, turn off heat and let sit for 10 minutes until the oil has turned a dark red-orange. Strain. Use oil to baste chicken.)

Marinate chicken at least three hours. Grill over hot coal. Brush chicken with *achuete* oil. Serve with garlic rice, *sinamak*, *toyo* with *calamansi* and sea salt.

Namit!

Mama Aracama's Spareribs

1 kg spareribs/*liempo* (skinless), sliced thin

¼ c each soy sauce, vinegar, garlic, brown sugar

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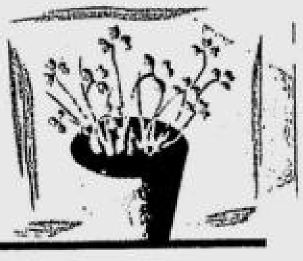

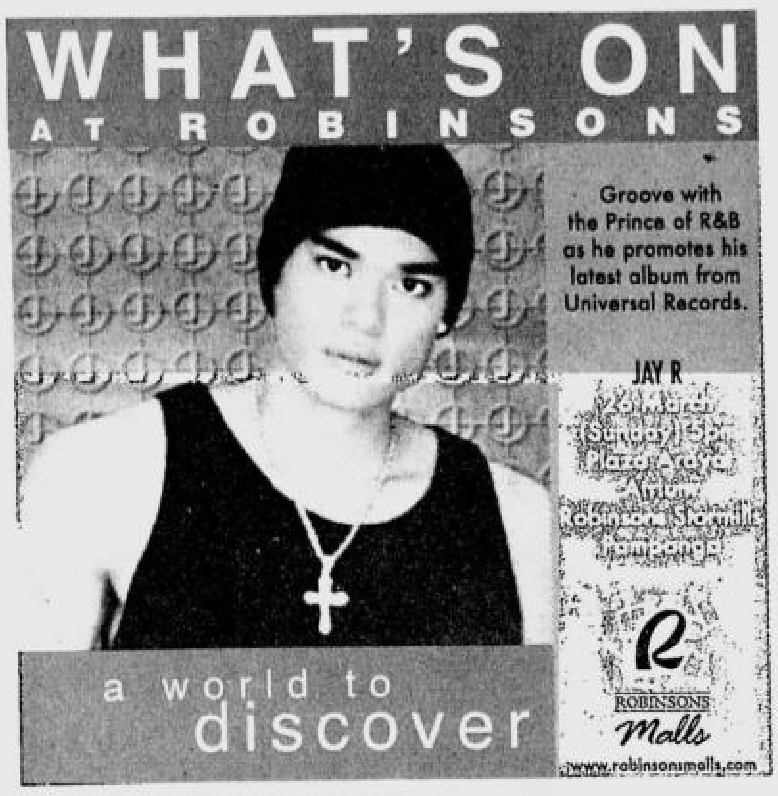

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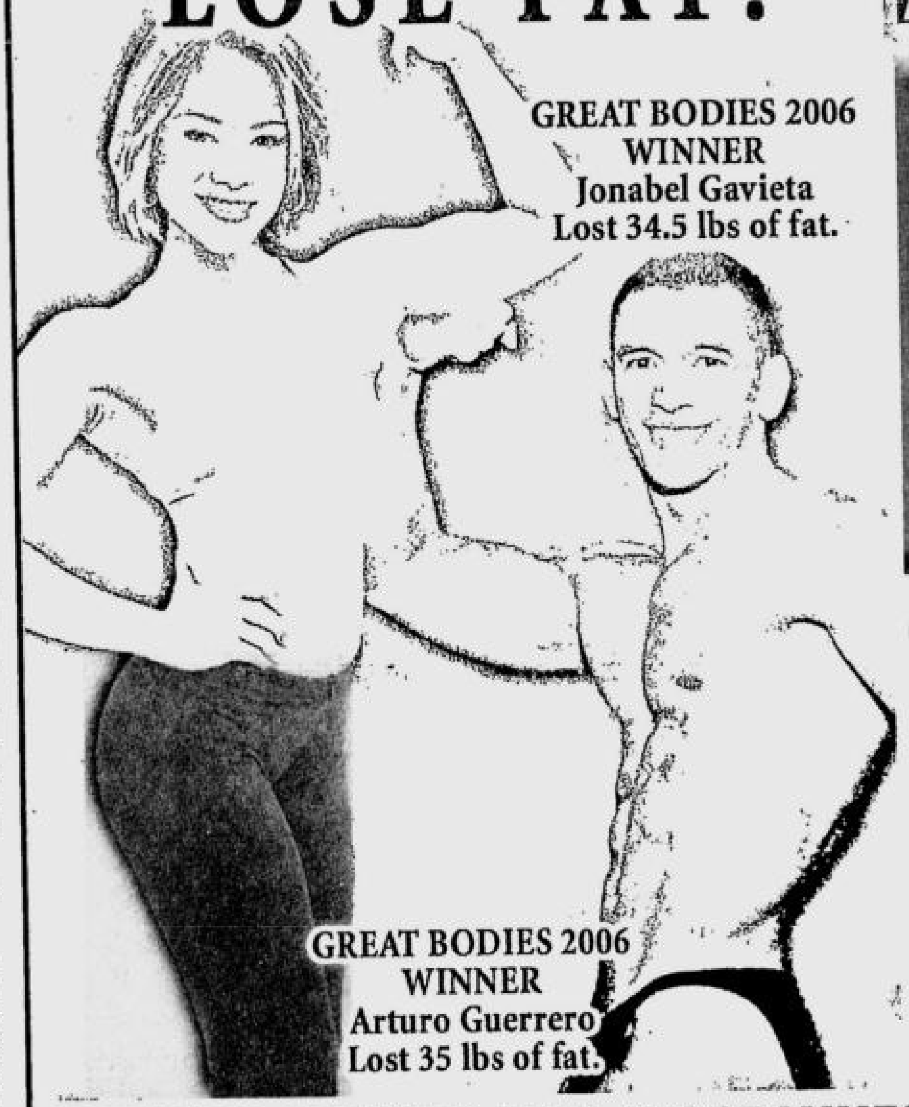

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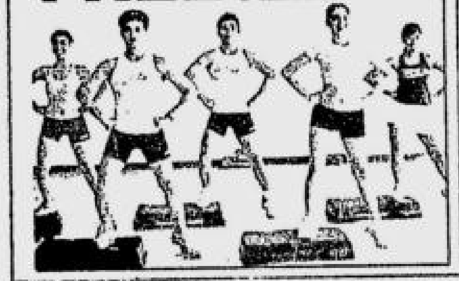

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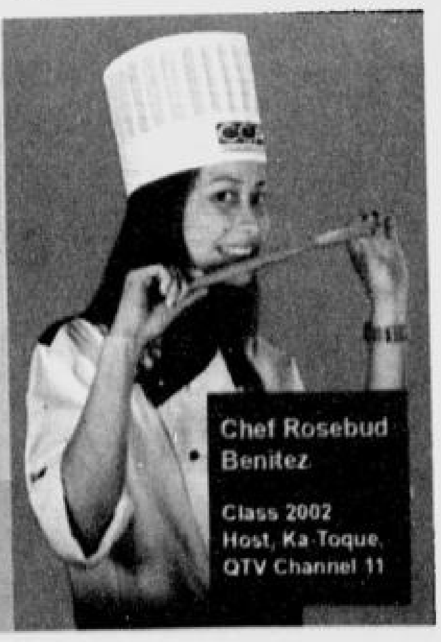

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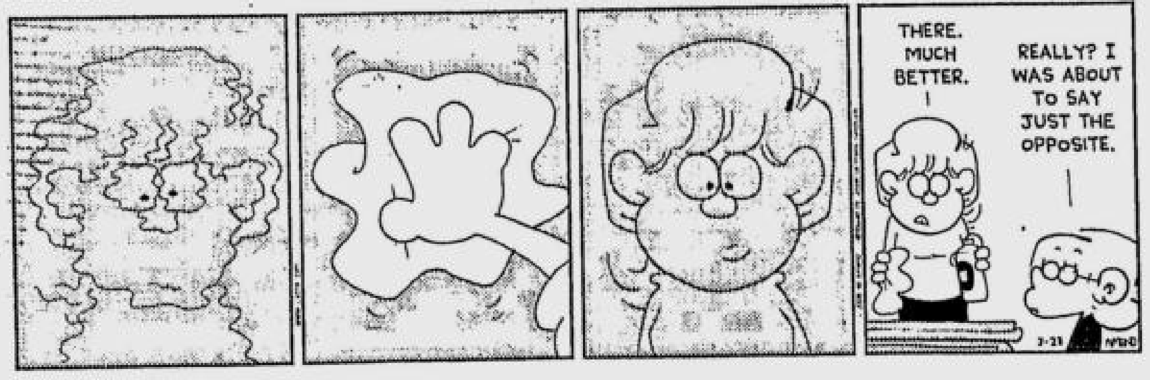
Host, Ka-Toque, QTV Channel 11

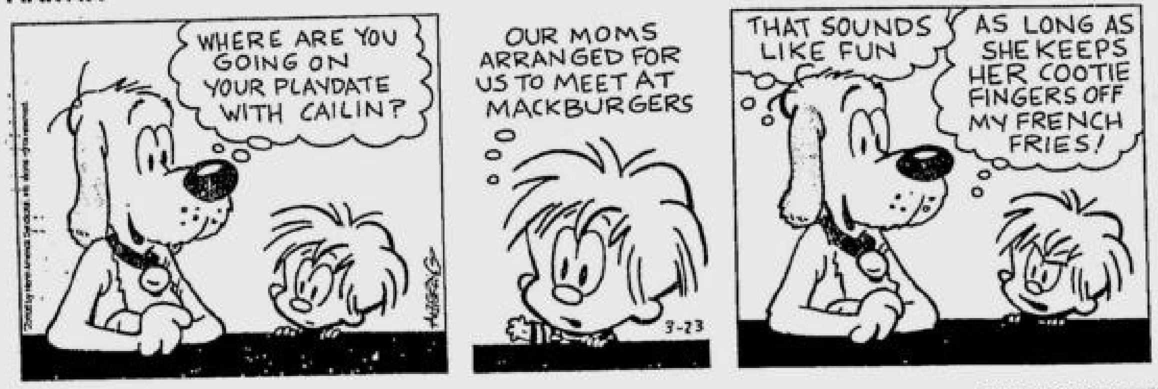
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


THERE. MUCH BETTER.
REALLY? I WAS ABOUT TO SAY JUST THE OPPOSITE.
3-23

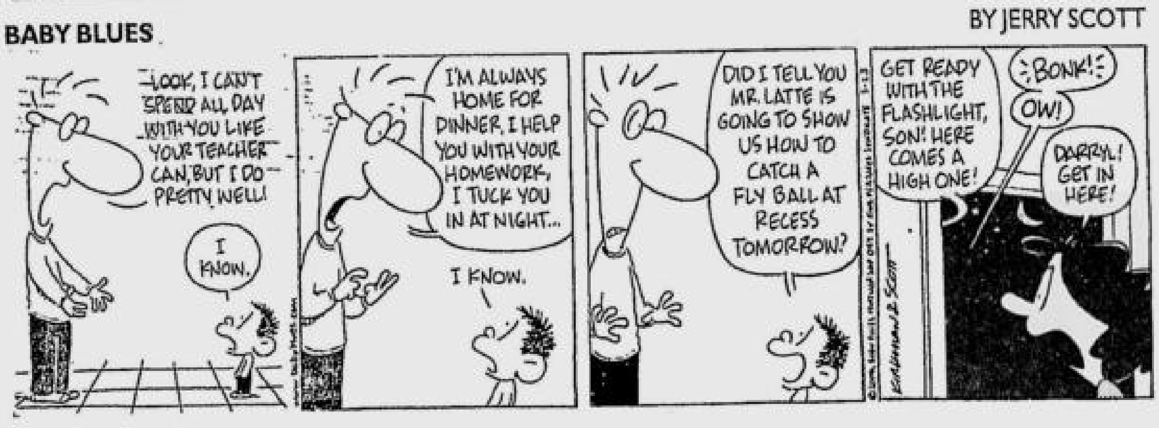
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


WHERE ARE YOU GOING ON YOUR PLAYDATE WITH CAILIN?
OUR MOMS ARRANGED FOR US TO MEET AT MACKBURGERS
THAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN
AS LONG AS SHE KEEPS HER COOTIE FINGERS OFF MY FRENCH FRIES!
3-23

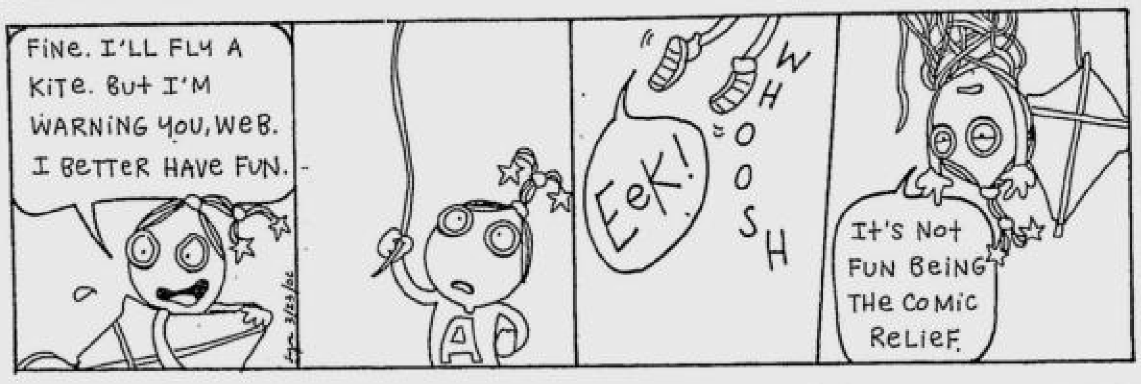
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


LOOK, I CAN'T SPEND ALL DAY WITH YOU LIKE YOUR TEACHER CAN, BUT I DO PRETTY WELL!
I KNOW.
I'M ALWAYS HOME FOR DINNER, I HELP YOU WITH YOUR HOMEWORK, I TUCK YOU IN AT NIGHT...
I KNOW.
DID I TELL YOU MR. LATTE IS GOING TO SHOW US HOW TO CATCH A FLY BALL AT RECESS TOMORROW?
GET READY WITH THE FLASHLIGHT, SON! HERE COMES A HIGH ONE!
BONK!
OW!
DARRYL! GET IN HERE!

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Fine. I'LL FLY A KiTe. But I'M WARNING YOU, WeB. I BeTTeR HAVe FUN.
EeK!
WHOOSH
It's Not FUN BeiNG THe CoMic ReLieF.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're multitalented because you're interested in many things. When you do find something you want to embrace, you give it your all. Invariably, the result is excellence! You're also kind and caring to others. Because of this you have many friends and acquaintances. Seek out extra solitude this year in order to learn something important.

Birthdate of: Keri Russell, actress; Richard Grieco, actor; Amanda Plummer, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Don't hesitate to ask for help from others. With the Sun in your sign, the gods are with you now. Make the most of this advantage!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Now is the time to look back over the past year and ponder the direction your life is taking. What changes do you want to make in the coming year?

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You feel revved up today. You're much more of a fighter for your own rights than usual. If you don't like something, you'll certainly speak your mind!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Do your homework before you make any proposals to the boss. Check small details. Get your ducks in a row before you act. (Preparation is the name of the game.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is an excellent day to get better organized at work. Talk to others to get the resources that you need to do your job. Having the right tools and materials makes all the difference.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You feel a bit playful and prankish today! This is a good day to promote work related to the arts or show business. Matters dealing with educating children might be a focus.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Domestic details require your attention today. Talk to partners about what needs to be done. Solutions to an old health problem could be at hand.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You have high standards for yourself at work now. Talk to coworkers about your ideas. Make sure you know what others expect of you. Tell people what you expect of them.

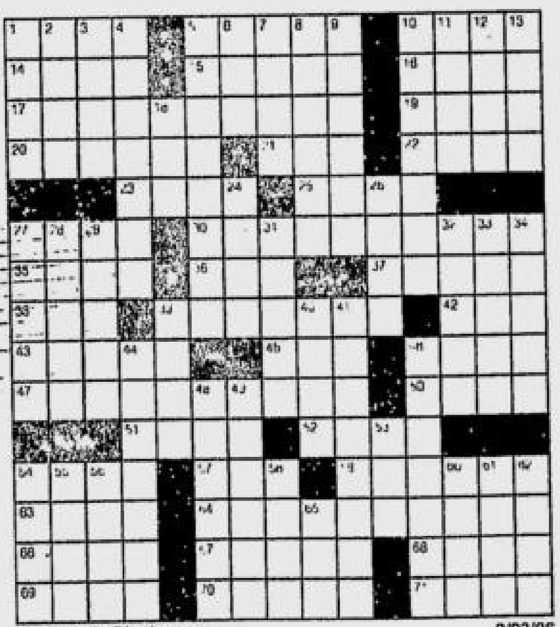
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is an excellent time right now for marketing, sales, writing, teaching and promoting anything you're interested in. You have the gift of gab!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): The Moon is still in your sign today, bringing you good fortune. Continue to work hard. Purchases of art or beautiful items will please you now.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You're unusually diplomatic and friendly with others now. Venus in your sign makes you receptive to what others say. People like you and seek out your company now.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): It's been challenging with Mercury going retrograde in your sign. By the weekend, this is finally over. Thank goodness! Things will soon be back to normal.

DAILY CROSSWORD

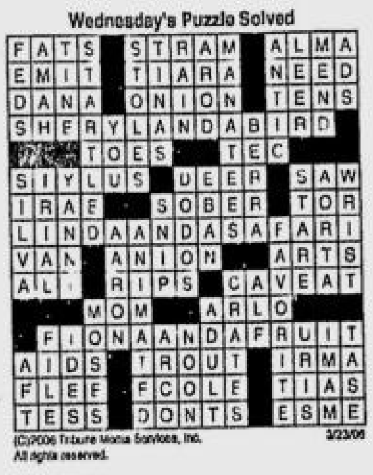


By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
3/23/06

ACROSS
1 Units of radiation
5 Valli of "The Third Man"
10 Strong desire
14 Screen symbol
15 Diminish
16 Shade of blue
17 Start of Napoleon quote
19 Shuts off
20 Organism requiring oxygen
21 Bobbsey twin
22 Wine character
23 Gets the tab
25 Big name in potato chips
27 Unvarying
30 Part 2 of quote
35 Asserted, formally
36 Show on TV
37 Boyer of baseball
38 Over the hill
39 Singer Judd
42 Hawaiian tuna
43 Poker action
45 Born as
46 Anna of "Nana"
47 Part 3 of quote
50 D.C. old-timers
51 Winglike components
52 Fulda tributary
54 Type of school
57 Recipe abbr.
59 Sluggish
63 Reindeer herder
64 End of quote
66 Curved molding
67 Creepers
68 "The Time Machine" race
69 Bambi, for one
70 Sea eagles
71 Farmer's place?

DOWN
1 Dove or Moreno
2 Tooth problem
3 Active person
4 Eavesdropped
5 Passage between buildings
6 Actress Myrna
7 Victor's cry
8 National park in Alaska
9 Where events occur
10 Implement
11 Casino town
12 Gallivants
13 Otherwise
18 Roundball letters
24 Start of a dig?
26 Org. founded in 1858
27 Wear
28 God of Islam
29 News services
31 Maine college town
32 Pac. pact
33 Waters or Merman
34 Riders' controls
39 Welfare
40 Hawaiian bird
41 ___ to say
44 Red fish
46 Used an aerosol
48 Indigenous
49 Subordinate's affirmative
53 Always, to a bard
54 Trudge
55 Latest fad
56 Fencer's foil
58 Actor Sean
60 Pineapple firm
61 Organic compound
62 Simon or Diamond
65 Victory sign

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved



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■	■	■	T	O	E	S	■	■	T	E	C	■	■	■
S	T	Y	L	U	S	■	D	E	E	R	■	S	A	W
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V	A	N	■	A	N	I	O	N	■	■	A	R	T	S
A	L	I	■	R	I	P	S	■	C	A	V	E	A	T
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T	E	S	S	■	D	O	N	T	S	■	E	S	M	E

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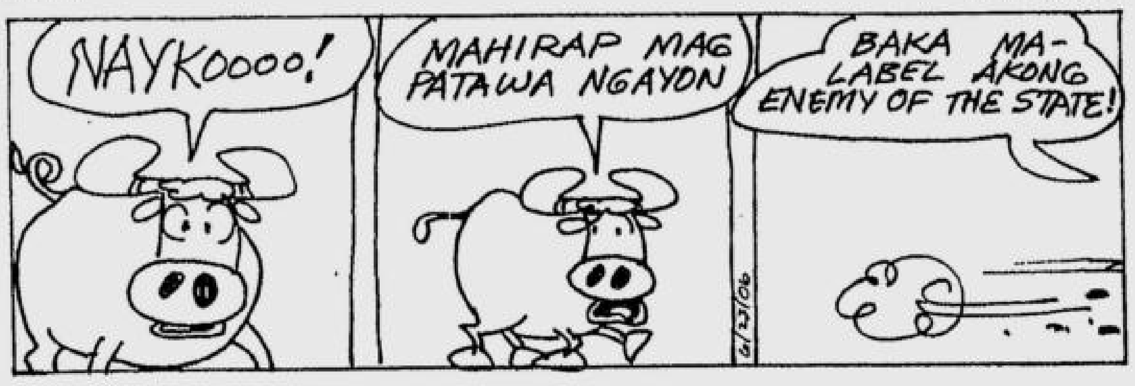
3/23/06

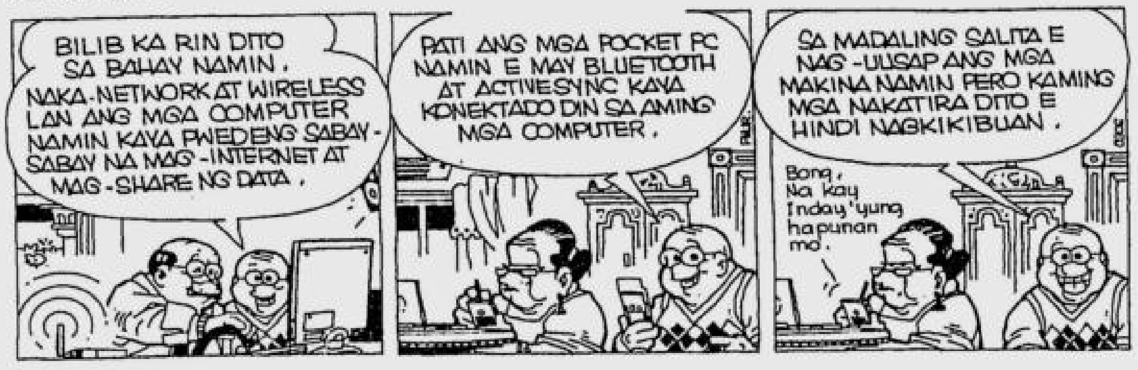
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


NAYKOOOO!
MAHIRAP MAG PATAWA NGAYON
BAKA MA-LABEL AKONG ENEMY OF THE STATE!
6/27/06

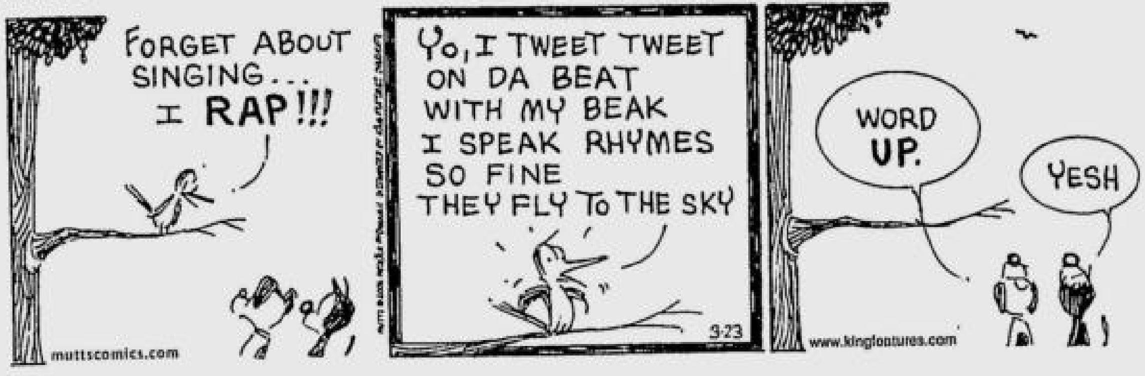
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


BILIB KA RIN DITO SA BAHAY NAMIN. NAKA-NETWORK AT WIRELESS LAN ANG MGA COMPUTER NAMIN KAYA PWEDENG SABAY-SABAY NA MAG-INTERNET AT MAG-SHARE NG DATA.
PATI ANG MGA POCKET PC NAMIN E MAY BLUETOOTH AT ACTIVESYNC KAYA KONEKTADO DIN SA AMING MGA COMPUTER.
SA MADALING SALITA E NAG-UUSAP ANG MGA MAKINA NAMIN PERO KAMING MGA NAKATIRA DITO E HINDI NAGKIKIBUAN.
Bong, Na kay Inday 'yung hapunan mo.

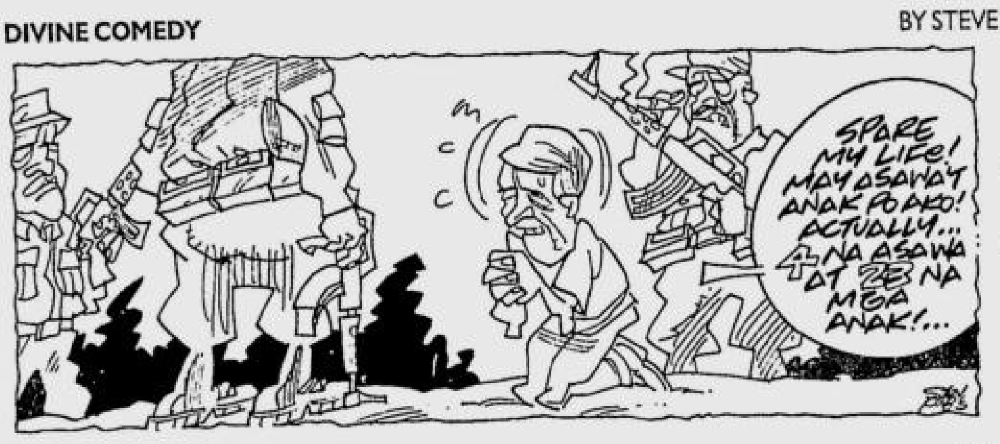
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


FORGET ABOUT SINGING... I RAP!!!
muttscomics.com
Yo, I TWEET TWEET ON DA BEAT WITH MY BEAK I SPEAK RHYMES SO FINE THEY FLY TO THE SKY
3-23
WORD UP.
YESH
www.kingfeatures.com

DIVINE COMEDY

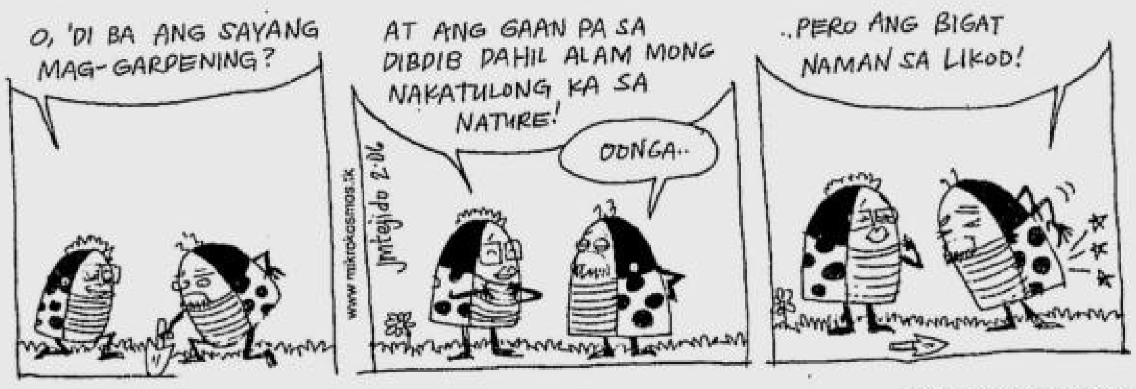
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


SPARE MY LIFE! MAY ASAWA'T ANAK PO AKO! ACTUALLY... 4 NA ASAWA AT 23 NA MGA ANAK!...

A POLYGAMOUS MAN BEGGING FOR HIS LIFE

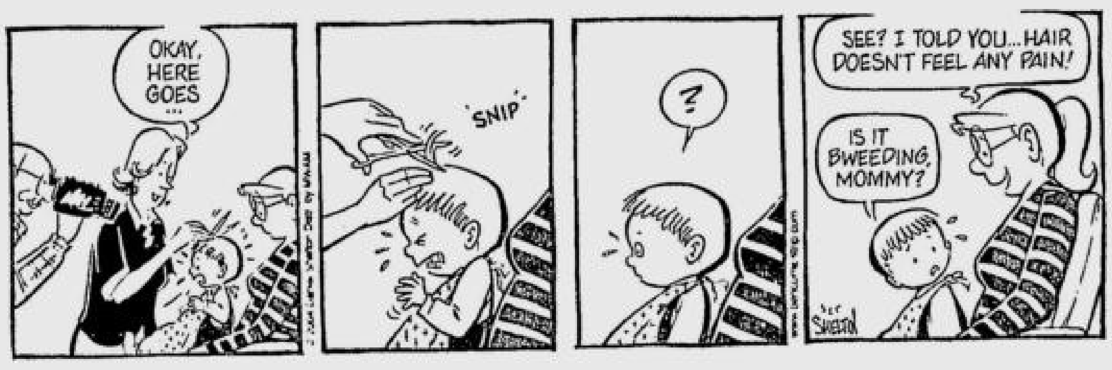
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


O, 'DI BA ANG SAYANG MAG-GARDENING?
AT ANG GAAN PA SA DIBDIB DAHIL ALAM MONG NAKATULONG KA SA NATURE!
OONGA..
..PERO ANG BIGAT NAMAN SA LIKOD!
www.mikrokosmos.tk

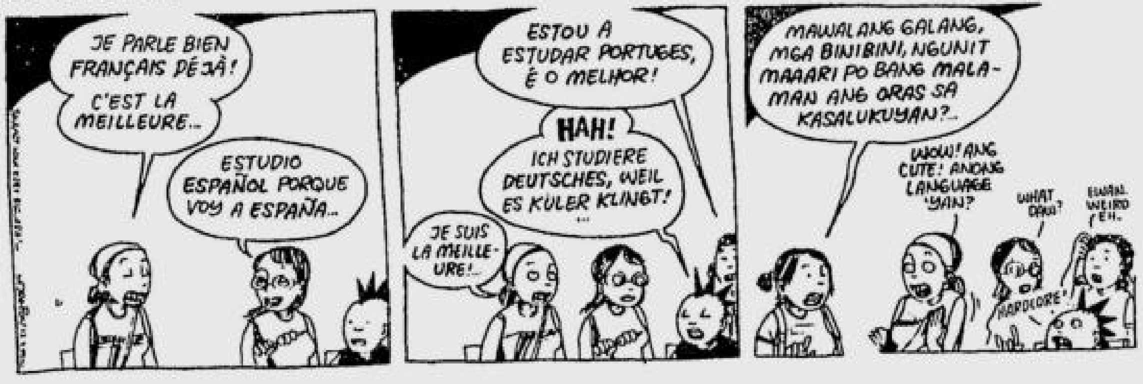
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


OKAY, HERE GOES...
SNIP
?
SEE? I TOLD YOU...HAIR DOESN'T FEEL ANY PAIN!
IS IT BWEEDING, MOMMY?

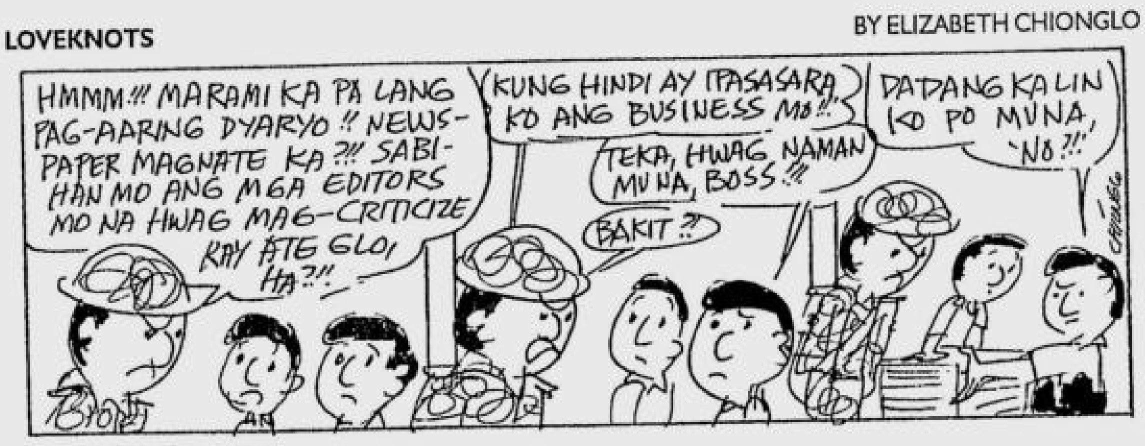
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


JE PARLE BIEN FRANÇAIS DÉJÀ! C'EST LA MEILLEURE...
ESTUDIO ESPAÑOL PORQUE VOY A ESPAÑA...
ESTOU A ESTUDAR PORTUGES, É O MELHOR!
HAH! ICH STUDIERE DEUTSCHES, WEIL ES KULER KLINGT!...
JE SUIS LA MEILLEURE!...
MAWALANG GALANG, MGA BINIBINI, NGUNIT MAAARI PO BANG MALAMAN ANG ORAS SA KASALUKUYAN?...
WOW! ANG CUTE! ANONG LANGUAGE 'YAN?
WHAT DAW?
EWAN. WEIRD 'EH.
HARDCORE!

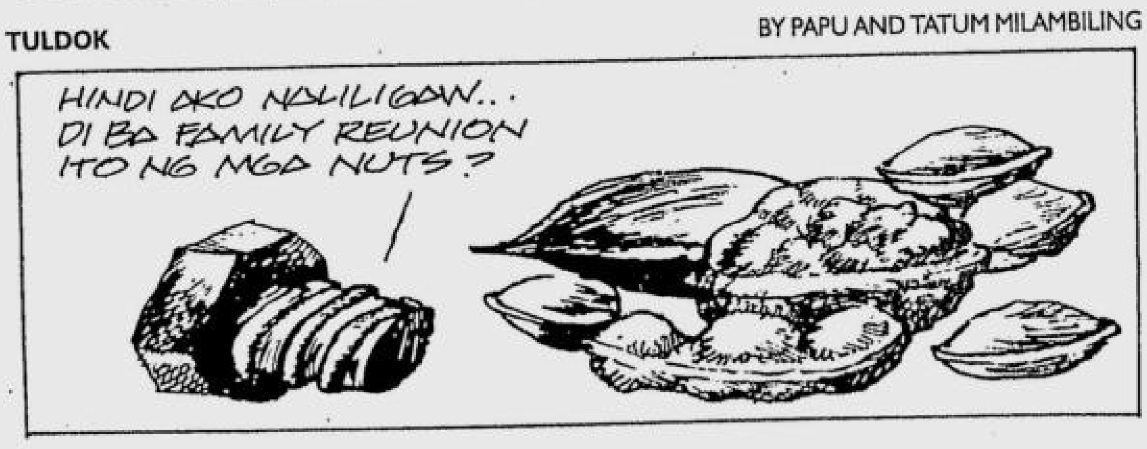
LOVEKNOTS

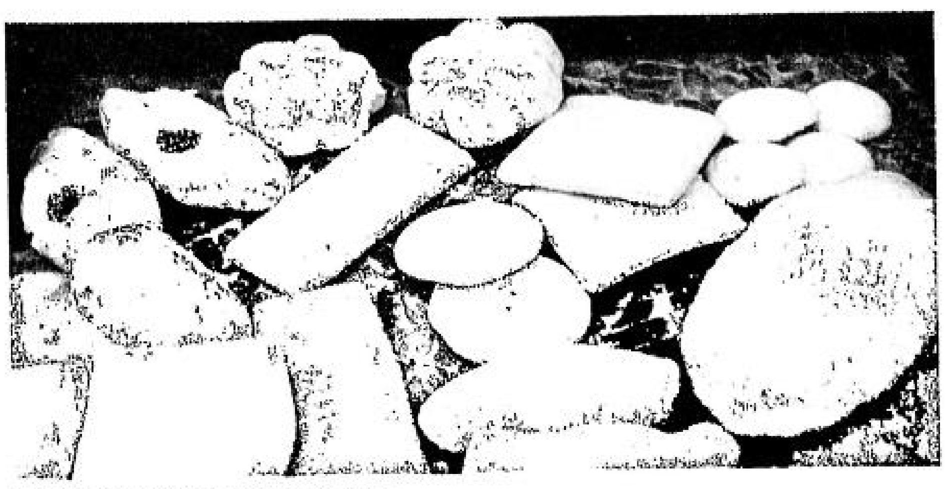
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HMMM!!! MARAMI KA PA LANG PAG-AARING DYARYO!! NEWSPAPER MAGNATE KA?!! SABIHAN MO ANG MGA EDITORS MO NA HWAG MAG-CRITICIZE KAY ATE GLOI, HA?!!
KUNG HINDI AY IPASASARA KO ANG BUSINESS MO!!
TEKA, HWAG NAMAN MUNA, BOSS!!!
BAKIT?!
DADANG KALIN KO PO MUNA, 'NO?!!

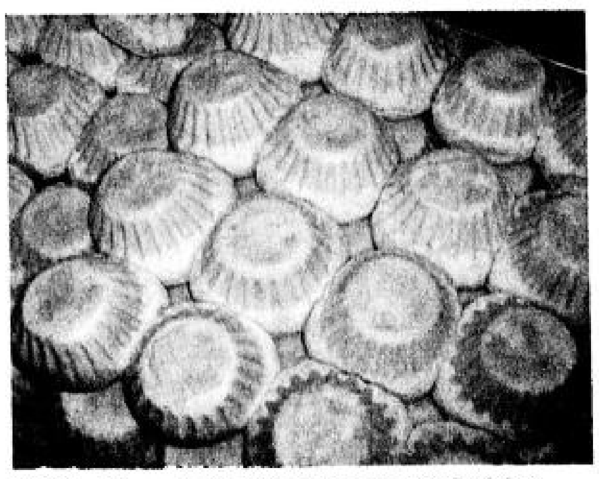
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


HINDI AKO NALILIGAW... DI BA FAMILY REUNION ITO NG MGA NUTS?



BAKERY cookies in various designs



THIS soft bread with fluted sides is called *salakot.*

An old-fashioned family bakery

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

NEARING LUNCH, THERE WAS NO ACTIVITY at Dizon's Bakery in Cavite City (618 P. Burgos Avenue). The brick oven had to be lighted just to make us see the inside.

On the tables, there was no dough rising. No breads were cooling; they were already in the shop. And there were no bakers. Some were doing their other job—driving tricycles.

The trip to Cavite was on the invitation of Myrna D. Segismundo, cookbook author and managing director of Restaurant 9501. She had written about the Dizon's Bakery of her mother's family in Lipa, Batangas. When she was young, her Lola Angge would allow her to help even if it meant her giving the wrong change or eating the day's produce. She even got a tip at the end of the day.

Sadly for Myrna, the bakery closed when her grandparents died. Her aunts said it was difficult to run the bakery with pilferage uncontrollable and the personnel, unreliable.

Survivor

The only surviving Dizon's Bakery is this one in Cavite that belongs to her mother's cousin, Amparo Dizon Bartolome.

On one side of the kitchen wall, formula for the breads was posted, protected by plastic cover. It was not understandable to non-bakers like me, especially when water measurements said "2 stainless + 750."

One of the ingredients listed was *buhay* that turned out to be the leavening agent or *levadura*. The numbers after it represented the time needed for the dough to rise.

While she has other siblings, only Amparo Bartolome has been running the bakery. One of her sisters acknowledged that Bartolome was the only one who was hardworking. Bartolome has sort of retired and the supervision, as well as the mixing of the formula, is now done by a daughter-in-law.

One of her interesting recollections was how the bakery supplied the bread needs of Sangley Point, an American base until 1971. The Americans were very strict about quality control and hygiene, she said. And the bakery was given the formula for some of the breads needed.

On the shelves was a remnant of that experience, the Pullman bread. That is how the Americans call the sliced white sandwich bread. Elsewhere in the country, it's called *pan* Americano or "tasty."

Many of the other bread names were familiar but the looks were different.

The *bonete* had a *pan de limon* top, round and glazed brown, but there was sort of a tail underneath. The *bonete* I know is shaped like an ice cream cone and is cake-like in consistency.

The bigger version of what looked like *monay*, an oblong loaf with a ridged top, was called "Queen" and the smaller version *pan de racion*. Bartolome changed the name because she said buyers used it to tease the salesgirls.

Not proper

She didn't consider it proper for anyone to say, "*Pabili nga ng monay ni* Maria." ("*Monay*" is slang for a woman's private part.)

According to Gilda Cordero Fernando, in her piece on "Hometown Bakery" ("Philippine Food and Life," Anvil Publishing, 1992), the bread was originally called *pan de monja* or nun's bread.

The *pan de sal*, however, couldn't be mistaken for anything else. At Dizon's Bakery, it's bigger than today's standard size and is also soft.

The crustier *pan de sal* called *pan de suelo*, so named because it's baked on the oven floor, is no longer done. Bartolome explained that the oven floor had to be really clean and the baker had to know how to retrieve the breads whole because there was no tray for the *pan de suelo*.

If there's one feature that makes the bakery different, it is the *queso de bola*, sold whole or in slices. It's the favorite filling for the breads, I was told.

The hospitality of Bartolome included lunch at her house where we feasted on squid *adobo*, fried *lumpia*, *pancit* and the Cavite specialties of *tahong* and *talaba*. The *pan de sal* was there to be filled with *quesillo* (*kesong puti*) from Tanza. There was also *leche flan*, the bakery's bestseller at Christmas. Imagine 500 *llaneras* sold during the season!

Remembering

While enjoying the food, the Dizon first cousins reminisced about the bakeries their fathers and mothers once managed. They recalled how Batangas buyers always touched the bread even if it was still hot from the kitchen. Bartolome said Cavite patrons never did that.

As in all Filipino bakeries, cookies are part of the product mix. Again, the names can be confusing.

The *jacobina* isn't a multilayered cube; it looks like a soda cracker. *Bingcong* is how the bakery calls its *galletas de patatas*, crisp square pieces with curled up corners. The *galyetas* are round white pieces with three holes on top.

Sampalok is shaped like the fruit. But it reminded me of *camachile* cookies eaten with *pancit* Malabon. What is called *apas* is *otap* in other places. The *broas* are smaller than those found in Quezon but look and taste the same.

While the small, rounded delicate *pacencia* is familiar, it doesn't have the white frost other bakeries put on top. *Dahon* was new to me, leaf-shaped shortbread with a raisin on top. *Masa podrida* sounded like a Mexican cookie but, at Dizon's, it's a flower-shaped shortbread with the consistency of a dried sconce.

A rectangular crisp cookie had its name etched on it—Kenkoy, a familiar name to Filipinos who knew the comics-strip character.

Filipino hospitality isn't complete without some "take home" items. And so Amparo Dizon Bartolome sent us off with a box of pineapple pie, several *leche flan*, packs of bread and *quesillo*.

We had earlier bought samples of every kind of cookie plus some of the breads. It will be a carbohydrate-filled week but I'm not complaining.

E-mail me at pinoyfood04@yahoo.com

Say no to plastic

By Linda B. Bolido

THE CONSUMER

MARCH IS NOT ONLY THE MONTH TO HONOR women. It is also the month for consumers. March 15 was World Consumer Rights Day.

To mark the occasion, the Ecological Waste Coalition, through Abi Jabines of Task Force Plastic/Extended Producer Responsibility Ecowaste Coalition (abi.gaia@no-burn.org), issued an open letter to appeal to Filipino consumers to "say no to plastic bags."

The coalition said, "Plastic carry bags have become a menace to the modern society. From malls, restaurants, bakeries, *turo-turo* to *sari-sari* stores, plastic bags are freely dispensed [without regard for] their health and environmental consequences."

Mindlessly discarded after use, the bags can obstruct waterways and cause floods, trap birds, choke and kill marine animals who mistake them for food. Plastics do not disintegrate so they can last for hundreds of years.

The letter added, "Harmful substances are released during production, use and disposal of most plastics… Assorted chemicals and additives are applied to make plastics and hazardous wastes are generated [during] production. When… burned, toxic pollutants are discharged into the environment, including heavy metals and dioxins."

The coalition urged consumers to "prevent the 'plasticization' of our lifestyles and the environment."

One of the significant things consumers could do, the group said, was to bring reusable carry bags when they shopped so they would not need plastic bags from retailers.

The coalition said smart retailers and vendors could encourage this practice by giving discounts to buyers who brought their own bags or by offering reusable cloth bags.

What the coalition is proposing is actually the trend now in many developed countries. Increasingly, checkout counters, particularly in groceries, supermarkets and produce stores, ask customers, "Plastic or paper?" Translated, that means, "Do you want us to put this in plastic or paper bag?"

Energy saving tips

Meanwhile, the Department of Trade and Industry, also to mark Consumer Day, offers energy saving tips to help consumers conserve energy and reduce their monthly electric bills.

Theme of this year's global celebration is "Energy: Sustainable Access for All."

Under its program, "Be Cool: Conserve Energy," DTI suggests the following:

- Turn off all lights in unoccupied rooms. Use natural light as much as possible.
- Buy only energy-efficient appliances and devices such as air-conditioners and refrigerators with high energy efficiency ratio, and compact fluorescent lamps.
- Switch off electrical appliances when not in use.
- Cover pots and pans for faster cooking when using an electric stove. When food is nearly done, turn off the burner and use remaining heat to finish cooking.
- Match the air-conditioner's capacity to the size of the room.
- Avoid excessive cooling, use thermostat control to attain desired temperature level. Seal windows and close doors.
- Maintain four inches of buffer space between the back of the refrigerator and adjacent wall. Clean the condenser coils at least twice a year and defrost regularly. Make sure the refrigerator door's magnetic strips seal properly.
- Wash and iron clothes in full loads. The same amount of electricity is consumed even if the washing machine is only half loaded. Reduce drying time by wringing out excess water from clothes before placing them in the dryer. If it is possible, dry clothes outdoors.

A promise

Three managers of a fast-food chain apologized to reader Ron Gonzales, who had a beef [pun intended] with one of their outlets.

Gonzales said he ordered pancakes for breakfast in the branch. But his pancake had a strand of hair on it. When he informed them of the problem and asked for a replacement, the guy who seemed to be the manager did not even apologize.

His order was replaced all right but the pancake was cold. So he decided to just ask for his money back.

Another "take-charge" guy, returned his money less the price of the partly consumed coffee. Again, no apologies.

Worse, it was a case of history repeating itself for Gonzales. Sometime in 2005, in the same outlet, his order "didn't arrive at all! I waited for about 20 minutes but no food arrived!"

He was refunded, less cost of coffee, but no apologies.

Gonzales said the managers promised to improve their service and encouraged him to visit the branch again, assuring him of "good service" next time.

He hoped, though, that he would not be the only one to enjoy "quality service," but other customers, too.

(Our regular columnist, Marietta V. Giron, is indisposed. Please send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Mascardo and Yague Sts., Makati City; PO Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office, 1263 Makati; or e-mail lbolido@inquirer.com.ph —Editor)

15th FHA held April 25-28 in Singapore

THE 15TH FOOD AND HOTEL ASIA (FHA 2006), Asia's largest international food and hospitality exhibition, will be held April 25-28 at the Singapore Expo.

The event will showcase almost 3,000 exhibitors and present the latest in the food and hospitality industry.

The exhibition has seven specialized events featuring food and drinks, wines and spirits, hospitality and food service, technology and equipment, interior and furnishings, as well as baking facilities.

It also includes the Culinary Challenge where culinary connoisseurs demonstrate how to use the latest in food technology and innovation.

Cyprus and Greece will host a country pavilion for the very first time. The Australian pavilion will present a full range of gourmet, beverage and organic products never exported to Asia before. Other group pavilions include China, India, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Portugal, Spain, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, United States and Turkey.

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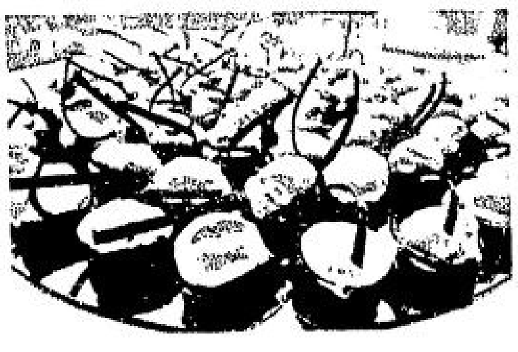
- Pizza Hut may suspend guarantee during bad weather conditions for the safety of our delivery rider.
- Guaranteed time may vary depending on the weather condition, and the distance from the nearest Pizza Hut restaurants.

based on 2005 ARO survey

Sweet love, though some like it bitter

People have found chocolates irresistible since cacao was first discovered

Text by Anne A. Jambora
Photos by Erik Arazas

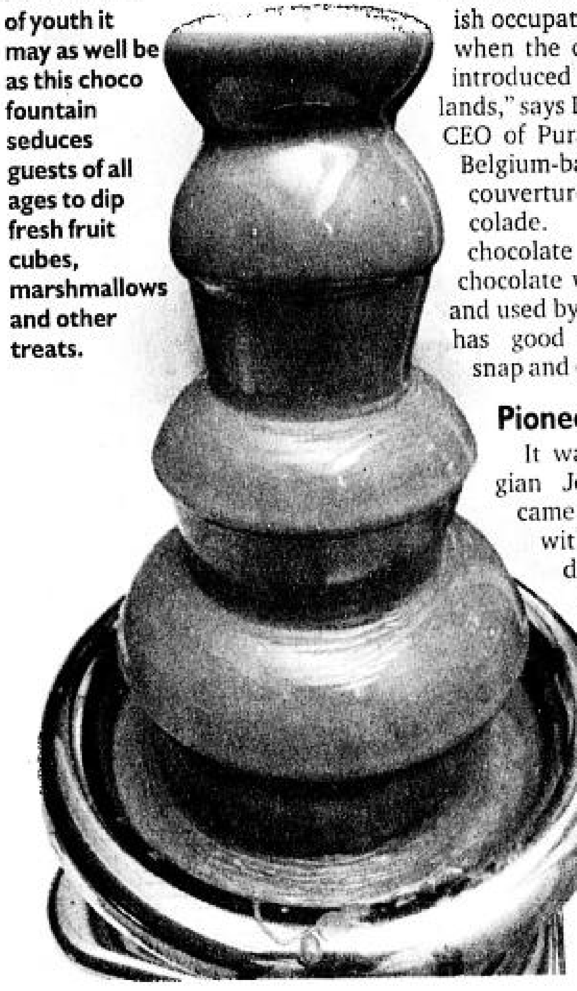


SINFUL chocolate, with its rich decadent flavor, has become a symbol of power, religion or romance through the ages.

THE ANCIENT MAYANS FIRST discovered sensory delights from cacao seeds more than 1,500 years ago. Thus began people's love affair with chocolates—at first as a frothy, liquid drink flavored with chili peppers.

The lure to engage the senses was so irresistible that exotic chocolate drinks were once coveted plums exclusive to royalty, noblemen, religious leaders and the influential rich. Cacao seeds, in fact, were carried in pockets and used like cash by the Aztec to pay for goods, taxes, services and more.

It was not until the turn of the 19th century when chocolate was made into its most familiar form—bars and blocks of hard candies—and finally made affordable for everyone to enjoy.



FOUNTAIN of youth it may as well be as this choco fountain seduces guests of all ages to dip fresh fruit cubes, marshmallows and other treats.

"Filipinos are fond of sweets, especially chocolates. This love for chocolates dates back to the Spanish occupation in the 1570s when the cacao plant was introduced to these islands," says Daniel Malcorps, CEO of Puratos Group, the Belgium-based makers of couverture chocolate Belcolade. (Couverture chocolate is premium chocolate with extra cocoa and used by professionals. It has good shine, texture, snap and contraction.)

Pioneer

It was after the Belgian Jean Nehaus Jr. came out in the 1920s with pralines, those delectable filled chocolate bonbons, that a creative burst of production stirred the community of chocolate makers in Brussels.

Thus were born Godiva and Leonidas, both users of Belcolade chocolate and responsible for putting Belgium at the heart of the world chocolate map.

Today, Belcolade keeps this status alive by producing luscious indulgences that are the objects of desire of chocolatiers everywhere. It has mastered the art of perfectly blending first-class cocoas with pure cocoa butter, creating a delicate balance between sweet and bitter and coming out with a range of varieties.

"We are serious about our chocolates. Chocolate is something very special to Belgium; it is a passion," says Belgian Ambassador Gregoire Vardakis.

Made of 100-percent cocoa butter, despite a European directive in 2000 allowing up to 5 percent addition of other vegetable fats in chocolate production, Belcolade is the choice of professional chocolate makers, confectioners and pastry chefs. Its smooth texture and delicate flavor, achieved through the use of the finest ingredients and highest quality-control standards, attest to Belgium's impeccable chocolate reputation.

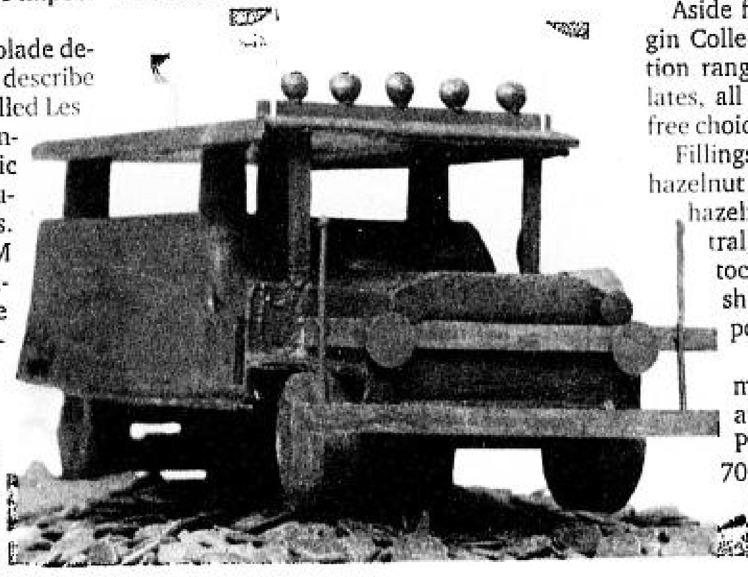
Not one to rest on its laurels, Belcolade developed a scientific methodology to describe the flavor profile of its chocolates called Les Aromes de Cyrano. It effectively identified and described the most specific and unique cocoas used in its exclusive Origin Collection chocolates. The method, says Puratos Phils. GM Bernard Poplimont, is based on "analytical and sensorial analysis of the flavor components present in chocolates."

Cyrano line

Carefully selected cocoa beans from Ecuador, Costa Rica, Papua New Guinea, Venezuela and Peru comprise the Cyrano flavors. From these cocoa beans, 22 distinct flavors were determined, ranging from woody, earthy, mushroom, fruity, whisky, smoky, spicy.

Though hardly discernible to an untrained tongue, the flavors give the Belcolade chocolates distinct and extraordinary tastes.

Puratos Global Markets director Peter Deriemaeker likens identifying chocolates to wine appreciation. Where and how the cacao beans were grown, geological, botanical and climatic differences determine the natural richness of cocoa. Like wine, the euphoric rapture nibbling on a chocolate brings is the combined sensory experience of sight, smell and taste.



LOCAL FLAVOR. A miniature jeepney carved out of pure chocolate is a tribute to the Filipino sweet tooth.

From the Cyrano flavors, four dark and two milk chocolates were created. The Noir Collection has 64-71 percent cocoa content, while Lait has 38-43 percent. The Organic Collection is available in noir, lait and blanc chocolates, all Ecocert-approved and 100 percent traceable. Ecocert is an inspection and certification body that verifies compliance of products with organic regulations of Europe, Japan and the United States.

Growing

Aside from the exclusive organic and origin Collections, Belcolade also has a Selection range of dark, milk and white chocolates, all made with natural vanilla. Sugar-free choices are available.

Fillings include pure hazelnut paste, hazelnut pralines, almond and almond hazelnut pralines, nutolade, white neutral, bake stable hazelnut and nutocrem. Specialties include grains, shavings, chunks, sticks and chocolate powder.

Malcorps notes the growing demand for quality bakery, patisserie and confectionery products in the Philippines. The country imports 50-70 tons of Belcolade chocolates annually, Poplimont adds, and the demand is modestly but steadily rising.

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph.

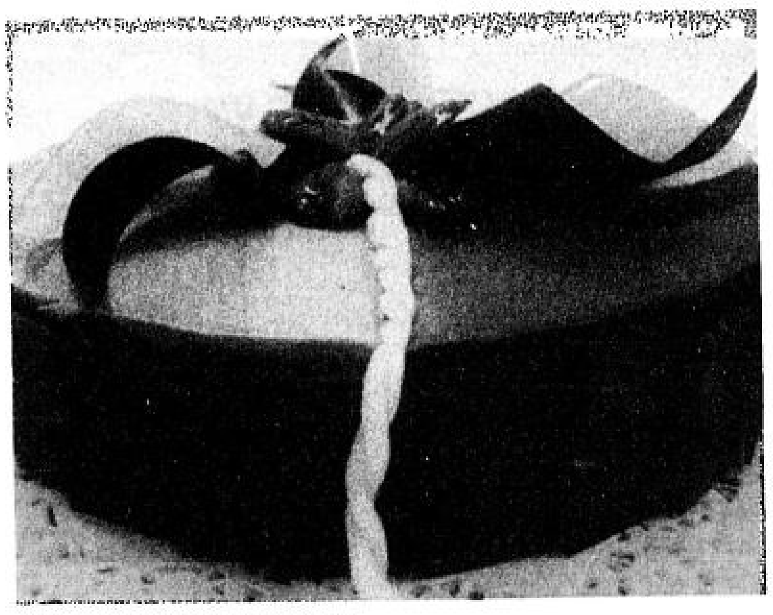
Bowl of treats for graduates

DINING OUT

PEKING GARDEN offers graduates a bowl of sweet treats. The special banana fritters on Big Scoop ice cream medley is free with a minimum food bill of P5,000+ (à la carte orders only). This special promo is good until April 30, lunch or dinner. Peking Garden is located at 2/L of Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati City. Call 8179066/9067.

JADE GARDEN fine dining Cantonese Restaurant offers a free dessert, Big Scoop ice cream and almond jelly black *gulaman*, for a minimum food bill of P5,000. Jade Garden is at Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center, Makati City. Call 8124548 or 8922636. The graduation offer is good until April 30 only.

KIMPURA gives graduates a complimentary *ebiko* roll dish (12 pieces of California maki special) with a minimum food bill of P2,500+, during lunch and dinner. Promo runs until April 30. Kimpura is at Greenhills Shopping Center (beside Uni-Mart), San Juan (tel. 7218816, 7218869); and 2/L Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati City (8924456, 8932307).



CAKE FOR GRADUATES
Manila Pavilion's Cake of the Month is the Chocolate Academe, mortarboard pastry made of white, milk and dark chocolates. Available at the Patisserie until March 31. Call 5261212 local 2326.

Ninth-is-free promo until April 15

BULACAN'S Gata Sari-Sari from Cabalen

CABALEN PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE graduates of 2006 with its "8+1-Free" buffet promo until April 15.

Every graduate who eats at Cabalen also gets a free Pepsi and a chance to win special prizes from the restaurant's pick-a-prize promo. Special freebies also await those who hold their graduation parties at Cabalen.

Graduates can enjoy the best dishes from across the country in Cabalen's weekly Regional Buffet specials, such as Laguna's Hipon sa Latik, Bulacan's Gata Sari-Sari, Bicol's Kinilaw na Tanigue sa Gata, Palawan's Pusit Pulutan and more.

Visit Cabalen Restaurants at 67 West Avenue, QC; 2/L SM City North Edsa, QC; 4/L Bldg B SM Megamall Mandaluyong City; 2/L Robinsons Place Ermita, Manila; Glorietta 3, Makati City; G/L Robinsons Starmills, San Fernando Pampanga; Brickroad Area Sta Lucia East Grand Mall Cainta Rizal; and the Village Square Harrison Plaza, Manila.

Call 9111584, 4219220 or 9135522.

Where to find the best 'siopao'

From page C1

1 tbsp pepper, freshly cracked

Marinate at least three hours. Grill over hot coal.

Bachoy

4 tbsp oil
2 tbsp garlic, minced
1 medium-sized onion, thinly sliced
3 slices ginger root, cut into strips
½ c *liempo*, diced and boiled
½ c pork liver, diced and boiled
¼ c pork kidney, diced and boiled
6 c chicken broth
1 tbsp *patis*
1 tsp salt
1/8 tsp pepper
250 g *bachoy/mami* noodles, washed and blanched

Garnish:
2 green onions, minced
Hard-boiled eggs
Shallots, fried
Garlic, fried

Heat oil in a saucepan and saute garlic, ginger and onion. Add pork, liver and kidney. Add broth. Add *patis*, salt and pepper to taste. Lower heat and let simmer. Add noodles. Garnish with green onions, eggs, shallots and fried garlic.

Tinapa Rice

¼ c oil
¼ c garlic, chopped
1/3 c shallots, sliced
1/3 c *tinapa*, flaked
4 c cooked rice
¼ c green onions
2 tsp Knorr seasoning
½ tsp salt
½ tsp pepper

Heat ¼ c oil in a wok. Add ¼ c garlic and 1/3 c shallots, add 1/3 c flaked *tinapa*. Mix in 4 c of cooked rice. Add in ¼ c sliced green onions. Season with 2 tsp Knorr seasoning, ½ tsp each of salt and pepper.

Garnish:
2 salted eggs
1/3 c shallots, sliced
¼ c green onions
½ c tomatoes

Top *tinapa* rice with a few pieces of chopped salted eggs, shallots, green onions, tomatoes.

Sinamak

4 c vinegar
16 cloves garlic, whole, peeled
3 ginger slices, cut into strips
6 pcs shallots
½ c chilies
1 tsp pepper whole
1 tsp salt
2 pcs *tanglad* hearts, bruised

Combine. Pour into a bottle. Age for at least three days before serving.

Pandan Suman sa Lihiya

2 c glutinous rice
1 ½ c *pandan* water (blend 2 c water with five *pandan* leaves, strain and measure 1 ½ c)
1 tbsp lye

Wash rice. Drain. Add lye and mix well. Cook rice with water in a wok or rice cooker. Wrap in banana leaves. Steam 20 minutes. Serve with sauce or with fresh mangoes, grated coconut and sugar.

Ube Suman

3 c glutinous rice
1 tsp salt
1 c *kakang-gata*
1 c second-extraction coconut milk
½ c *ube*, grated
1 c water
Food coloring if necessary
Sugar

Process *ube* with 1 c second-extraction. In a rice cooker, cook rice with *kakang-gata*, *ube* mixture, water and salt until rice is done.

Add sugar to taste, mix well. Add food coloring if desired. Cool. Shape in banana leaves. Steam for 15 minutes. Serve with *suman*.

Suman sauce:
1 c second-extraction coconut milk
3/4 c muscovado sugar
1 c *kakang-gata*
Salt

Bring *kakang-gata*, brown sugar and salt to a boil. Add second-extraction. Serve with *suman*.

The book "Kitchen Rescue, Excerpts from the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Volume 1," is available nationwide at all National Book Stores.

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